1

Serial Verb Constructions in Typological Perspective

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1. General remarks

A serial verb construction (SVC) is a sequence of verbs which act together as a single predicate, without any overt marker of coordination, subordination, or syntactic dependency of any other sort. Serial verb constructions describe what is conceptualized as a single event. They are monoclausal; their intonational properties are the same as those of a monoverbal clause, and they have just one tense, aspect, and polarity value. SVCs may also share core and other arguments. Each component of an SVC must be able to occur on its own. Within an SVC, the individual verbs may have same, or different, transitivity values.

Serial verb constructions are widespread in Creole languages, in the languages of West Africa, Southeast Asia, Amazonia, Oceania and New Guinea—see examples (1)–(6) below. SVCs can express grammatical meanings, as in (1), where

1 I am grateful to all the speakers of serializing languages who patiently taught me over the years—the Brito and the Muniz family (Tariana), Humberto Baltazar (Warekena), Candelário da Silva (Bare), various speakers of Baniwa of Ícana, and Pauline Laki and other members of the Avatip language community (ESP, PNG) who taught me Manambu. Thanks go to R. M. W. Dixon, John Hajek, Antoine Guillaume, Andrew Ingram, and Knut Olawsky, for insightful comments, discussion, and inspiration.

2 This definition consolidates the existing terminological consensus (cf. Foley and Olson 1985; Givón 1991; Durie 1997; Crowley 1987; Zwicky 1990; Noonan 1985; and also Andrews and Manning 1999), avoiding undue differentiation between ‘compounding’ and ‘serialization’ (see discussion below). Recently, there has been an upsurge of interest in serial verb constructions among linguists of all persuasions (see, for instance, attempts to formalize the ‘serialisation parameter’ in Stewart 2001). In the present chapter I do not try to mention everything ever published on serial verb constructions, but concentrate on sources containing reliable linguistic data and inductive generalizations, rather than reinterpretations in terms of a formalism. Additional terminological issues are outlined in Appendix.

Throughout this chapter, the terms ‘serial verb construction’ and ‘serial verb construction (SVC)’ are used interchangeably. Serial verb constructions are underlined in the language examples. The genetic and/or areal affiliation of a language is given at its first mention.

Wherever possible, I have preferred to use examples from a language for which a comprehensive grammar is available, so that a putative serial verb construction may be studied within its full grammatical context.
an SVC introduces an argument: a ‘beneficiary’ me. One verb in a serial construction may describe the effect of the other, as in (3). SVCs may refer to sequences of actions, as in (4)–(6); or just form lexical idioms, as in (2). They may consist of two, or more than two, verbs, as in (5) and (6).

Baule (Kwa, Niger-Congo: Creissels 2000: 240)

(1) ṣ-à-fà i swà n à-klè mi he-ANT-take his house DEF ANT-show me ‘He has shown me his house’ (take-show)

Igbo (Igbo, Benue-Congo, Niger-Congo: Lord 1975: 27)

(2) ó ti-wà-rà étéré à he hit-split.open-TENSE plate the ‘He shattered the plate’

Taba (Western Austronesian: Bowden 2001: 297)

(3) n=babas welik n=mot do 3sg=bite pig 3sg=die REAL ‘It bit the pig dead’

Alamblak (Papuan area: Bruce 1988: 27)

(4) wa-yarim-ak-hùta-n-m-ko IMP-ELEV-get-put-2sg-3pl-ELEV ‘Get them on a level plane toward me (and) put them up there’

Dâw (Makú, Northwest Amazonia)

(5) yöh bɔ-hàm-ɔɔ medicine spill-go-happen.straight.away ‘The medicine spilt straight away’

Tariana (Arawak, Northwest Amazonia)

(6) phia-nihka [phita pi-thaketa] pi-eme you-REC.PAST.INFER 2sg+take 2sg-cross+CAUS 2sg-stand+CAUS ha-ne-na hyapa-na-nuku dem-distal-cl:vertical hill-cl:vertical-top.non.a/s ha-ne-riku- ma-se dem-distal-cl:loc-cl:pair-loc ‘Was it you who brought that mountain across (lit. take-cross-put.upright) (the river) to the other side?’ (asked the king)

Serial verb constructions are a grammatical technique covering a wide variety of meanings and functions. They do not constitute a single grammatical category. They show semantic and functional similarities to multiclausal and subordinating
constructions in non-serializing languages (see the fascinating account of functional and semantic commonalities between SVCs and converbal clauses by Bisang 1995; and also Chapters 4, 5, 14, and 16 in this volume). As Matisoff (1969:71) puts it, SVCs ‘serve to provide in a uniform way the sort of information that in the surface grammar of languages like English is handled by a formally disparate array of subordinating devices: complementary infinitives, -ing complements, modal auxiliaries, adverbs, prepositional phrases, even whole subordinate clauses’.

Serial verb constructions come in a variety of guises. They may consist of several phonological and grammatical words, as in examples (1), (3), and (6); or form one word, as in (2), (4), and (5). Their components may always be contiguous, as in (6); or they may be interruptable by other constituents, as in (1) and (3). Some verbal categories may have to be marked on every verb in a series, as with anterior in (1) and person in (6); or just once per construction, as with realis in (3). All components of a serial construction may share subject, as in (1–2), and (4–6). Or they may share another argument: in (3) the object of the first component (’bite’) is the same as the subject of the second one (’die’).

In this chapter, I present an overview of SVCs covering cross-linguistically attested parameters of variation, formulating generalizations as to the types of SVCs and their expected behaviour, so as to provide a unified framework for the analysis and interpretation of verb serialization in its full diversity.

Properties of SVCs are surveyed in §2.1–§2.5. In an individual language, SVCs are expected to have most, but not necessarily all, of these properties. This suggests a scalar, or continuum-type approach, to SVC—which can be either more or less like the prototype—which has the maximal properties. In particular, prototypical SVCs share arguments, and thus constitute a cohesive and tightly-knit representation of one event. Argument sharing in SVCs is discussed in §2.6. Additional language specific properties of SVCs are outlined in §2.7.

In subsequent sections, SVCs are classified based on the following parameters:

A. Composition: symmetrical serial verb constructions consist of two or more verbs each chosen from a semantically and grammatically unrestricted class. Asymmetrical serial verb constructions include a verb from a grammatically or semantically restricted class (e.g. a motion, or a posture verb). See §3, on clear-cut and on intermediate cases.

B. Contiguity versus non-contiguity of components: verbs which form a serial verb construction may have to be next to each other, or another constituent may be allowed to intervene between them. See §4.1.

C. Wordhood of components: components of a serial verb construction may or may not form independent grammatical or phonological words. See §4.2.

D. Marking of grammatical categories in a serial verb construction: verbal categories—such as, for instance, person of the subject and object(s); tense, aspect, modality; negation; or valency changing—may be marked just once per
construction (‘single marking’); or can be marked on every component (‘concordant marking’). See §4.4.

Verb serialization may be fully productive. Or it may be limited to just a few subtypes. A distinction needs to be drawn between serial verb constructions as a grammatical technique and idiomatic verb combinations restricted to a particular tense, aspect, or mood form. This, alongside the functions of SVCs, is the topic of §5. Which verbs are more likely, and which are less likely to occur in various types of serial constructions is discussed in §6. Whether a language is likelier to have just symmetrical or just asymmetrical SVCs is also addressed in this section.

We will see that the more contiguous the components of an SVC are in their surface realization, the more bound together they are, and the closer the whole construction comes to a prototypical SVC. This agrees with the principles of iconic motivation which also account for the semantic and functional differences between several kinds of SVCs within one language—see §7. Serializing languages tend to share properties; and they also tend to form areal clusters. This is discussed in §8. A summary is given in §9, along with perspectives for further studies. The last section contains an overview of the volume. Terminological issues are briefly discussed in the Appendix.

2. Defining serial verb constructions

The recognition of serial verb constructions is typically based on a combination of formal and semantic properties addressed in this section.

2.1. Serial verb construction as a single predicate

An SVC functions on a par with monoverbal clauses in discourse, and occupies one core functional slot in a clause. Verbs which form an SVC act together as a syntactic whole. In addition, SVCs are often translatable as single predicates into non-serializing languages (some problems which may arise then are mentioned at the end of §3.4.3).

Verbs which form an SVC cannot take separate markers of syntactic dependency. In Kambera (Austronesian), if an SVC is the predicate of a relative clause, it takes one relativizer per construction, as shown in (7).

Kambera (Klamer 1998: 323)

(7) na pulung jia-ya na [pa-laku ngandi-na]

art word exist-3sgA article relativized.obj go take-3sggenitive

‘The gospel is what he brought’ (lit. went and took (along))

Similarly, in Kana (Cross-River, Benue Congo: Ikoro 1995: 250), the relative clause marker occurs once per SVC. Example (31), from Toqabaqita (§5 of Chapter 12) illustrates the same phenomenon. In (29) (§5 of Chapter 12) the nominalizing suffix is attached to the last verb in an SVC, but has the whole SVC in its scope.
If an SVC is the predicate of a subordinate or embedded clause, its components cannot be embedded independently. An SVC in Tariana takes one subordinating morpheme, as in (8); or one nominalizer per construction, as in (17) from Chapter 8. Note that the subordinator -ka goes at the end of the SVC in (8), while the nominaliser -ri appears on its first component.

Tariana (my field materials)

(8) [nhuta nu-thaketa]-ka di-ka-pidana
   1sg+take 1sg-CROSS+CAUS-SUBORD 3sgnf-see-REM.PAST.REP
   ‘He saw that I took (it) across’ (lit. take-cross)

Serial verb constructions take one nominalizer and one subordinating morpheme in Goemai (§2 of Chapter 3), Khwe (§3 of Chapter 4), and Ewe (§5.4 of Chapter 5). Alternatively, every component of an SVC can take the same affix, as in Lango (Nilotic). In (9), both components of an embedded SVC are in the infinitive form. A first person singular form of the same SVC in a main clause is at (15) below.

Lango (Noonan 1992: 212)

(9) ámítò cwè kàttò rwôt
   1sg+want+PROG fat+INFIN exceed+INFIN king
   ‘I want to be fatter than the king’

Serial constructions are different from complex predicates and other multiverb sequences which are syntactically combined, but where neither component can function on its own, especially if one of them is a dependent or a nominalized form. For this reason, complex verb forms like perfect or continuous in English are not serial verb constructions (see further arguments in Zwicky 1990: 9). Along similar lines, converb constructions in Khwe (Chapter 4) and in Wolaitta (Chapter 15) are not serial verb constructions. There can be further, language-specific ways of distinguishing serial verb constructions from multi-verb structures of other kinds. Table 2 in Chapter 5 summarizes the differences between consecutive clauses, overlapping clauses and serial verb constructions in Ewe. Table 1 in Chapter 3 shows how serial verb constructions in Goemai differ from superficially similar sequential, conjoined and subordinate verb sequences.

A monopredicative reading of serial verb constructions is often corroborated by intuitions of native speakers. An SVC is often best translated with a monovalent clause into a non-serializing language—during a fieldwork session, one of my Tariana consultants remarked: ‘It is not like Portuguese, we just cannot say it with one verb’. Language-specific tests for monopredicative reading of SVCs include answers to a yes–no question. In Tariana such answers to a
A question containing a single-verb predicate involves the repetition of just this verb; an answer to a question containing an SVC involves repeating a whole construction or part of it, but never just one word (see Aikhenvald 1999a). In Goemai (§2 of Chapter 3), addressees insert interjections such as ‘yes’ only following the whole SVC. In other multiverb structures, a ‘yes’ can follow each individual verb.

### 2.2. Monoclusalilty of Serial Verb Constructions

Serial verb constructions are monoclausal and allow no markers of syntactic dependency on their components. This is criterial in distinguishing serial verb constructions from coordination, consecutivization, complement clauses, subordinate clauses, and other multiclausal structures (see, for instance, Bradshaw (1993), on superficial similarities between serial verb constructions and clause-chaining structures with same subject and different subject marking in Jabêm and Numbami, both Austronesian, and Jarkey (1991), on the differences between serial verb constructions and other verb sequences in Hmong). The presence of an overt linker—expressed with a conjunction, as in Nupe, or with a change in tone, as in Igbo—helps to distinguish consecutive constructions from serial verb constructions in African languages (Watters 2000: 219–20).

Coordinate structures with the same components as in SVCs can differ in meaning from SVCs (see Foley and Olson 1985: 20–1). A striking example comes from Anyi-Sanvi. Example (10) is an SVC (where both subject and object are shared), while (11) is a coordinate structure with a separate subject marking on the second verb ‘eat’, and a separate object constituent for both verbs.

**Anyi-Sanvi (Kwa family, Niger-Congo: Van Leynseele 1975: 191–2)**

(10)  cúá  či  ākó  `dì
    dog    catch+HAB chicken  eat
   ‘The dog eats (lit. catch-eat) a chicken’

(11)  cúá  či  ākó  o̲-dì  į
    dog    catch+HAB chicken  he-eat  it
   ‘The dog catches a chicken and copulates with it’

Paraphrasing an SVC with two clauses may result in an ungrammatical, or a semantically bizarre sentence. The SVC in (2), from Igbo, cannot be paraphrased with a sequence of sentences like (12) and (13). Example (12) is semantically odd: ‘only a lunatic would try to beat a plate’; in contrast, to ‘shatter’ a plate, as in (2), is perfectly normal. (A similar example from Yimas is discussed by Foley and

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3 This follows from the monopredicative character of serial verb constructions. The first consistent and cross-linguistically informed line of argument for the monoclausal analysis of serial verb constructions was proposed by Foley and Olson (1985). Monoclusalilty of serial verb constructions and complex predicates is also addressed by Durie (1997) and Schultze-Berndt (2000: 36–7).
Olson (1985: 21); also see the discussion of Yoruba by Bambose (1974: 19), and Stahlke (1963).)

Igbo (Lord 1975: 27)

(12) *?ó ti-rè étèrè à
  he  hit-tense plate the
  '?He hit the plate'

(13) *ó wà-rà étèrè à
  he  split.open-tense plate the

Example (13) is unacceptable for a different reason: the verb ‘split open’ on its own is intransitive. In Igbo, a verb in an SVC and when used on its own can have different transitivity and argument structures (Lord 1975: 27–8, 33–4; also see §2.6).

Even if an SVC can be paraphrased with two clauses, there is always some semantic difference. The SVC in (3), from Taba describes one event: the death of a pig comes ‘as a direct and immediate consequence of the pig’s being bitten.’ The same verbs as in (3) occur in (14), but as coordinated predicates. In (14) ‘there may have been a considerable time elapsed between the biting and the pig’s eventual death by bleeding’; that is, the death of the pig could have occurred as an indirect consequence of having been bitten, but did not have to occur. This is in contrast to (3).

Taba (Bowden 2001: 297–8)

(14) n=babas welik n=ha-mot i
    3sg=bite pig 3sg=CAUS-die 3sg
    ‘It bit the pig and killed it’

Finally, in a number of serializing languages, SVCs constitute one grammatical word; and are thus obviously monoclausal (cf. Foley 1991: 321–20). This is the case in Papuan languages of the Sepik (Yimas, Alamblak, and Manambu); Igbo (Benue-Kwa: see Lord 1975, 1977); Olutec (Mixean: see Chapter 13) and Lakota (Siouan: see Chapter 14) (also see Nishiyama 1998, on Verb–Verb compounds as serial verb constructions in Japanese). These instances, known as verb compounding, or root-serialization, are discussed in more detail in §4.2.

2.3. PROSODIC PROPERTIES OF SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

A serial verb construction has the intonational properties of a monoverbal clause, and not of a sequence of clauses. In many languages clause boundaries are indicated by an intonation break; no such intonation break or pause markers can occur between the components of an SVC. This is the case in most languages discussed in this volume, and also in Kambera (Kramer 1998: 280), Anamuxra (Ingram 2001), Taba (Bowden 2001: 303–4), and Ambae (Oceanic subgroup of Austronesian: Hyslop 2001: 275). (See Givón 1990, 1991 for some evidence in
favour of a pause continuum from components of SVCs through switch-reference marked clause chains to fully independent clauses).

2.4. Shared Tense/Aspect, Mood, Modality, and Polarity Value

Having shared tense, aspect, mood, modality, illocutionary force, and polarity values implies that no independent choice or contrast in any of these categories is possible for the individual components of an SVC (see Chapters 2–15 in this volume). This makes them all the more different from multiclausal structures (also see Schiller 1990a: 42). Serializing languages have few if any restrictions on the mood, modality, or polarity they can occur with (in contrast to double verb constructions discussed in §5). Table 1 in Chapter 7 shows how in Thai SVCs differ from other superficially similar multiverb structures in their shared polarity, modality and temporal setting.

A language may mark tense, aspect, mood, or evidentiality on every verb. In Lango, both components of an SVC have to take the same marking for all verbal categories such as habitual, as in (15).

Lango (Noonan 1992: 211–12)

(15) `cwê `l hwô \(\text{1sg+fat+HAB}\) \(\text{1sg+exceed+HAB}\) \(\text{king}\)

‘I am fatter than the king’ (lit. I-fat I-exceed king)

In contrast, aspectual and modal categories are marked one per SVC in Khwe (16 below; example (16) of Chapter 4). Similar examples are in Cantonese (example (36), §4.2 of Chapter 2), Goemai (§2 of Chapter 3), and Eastern Kayah Li (§1.1 of Chapter 6).

Khwe

(16) n|/ \(\text{come}\) khô–hê \(\text{die-I-PRES}\)

‘This woman is about to die’

There can only be one negator per SVC. It can either have the whole construction as its scope, as in (17) below, or part of the construction. Similar examples include Goemai (§2 of Chapter 3), Eastern Kayah Li (§1.1 of Chapter 6) and Kana (Ikoro 1995: 253).

Lango (Noonan 1992: 211)

(17) pê `cwê `l hwô \(\text{NEG}\) \(\text{1sg+fat+HAB}\) \(\text{1sg+exceed+HAB}\) \(\text{king}\)

‘I am not fatter than the king’ (lit. I-fat I-exceed king)

In Alamblak, only one negative word can occur with an SVC. The scope of negation can be the whole construction, or any one of its components by itself,
or any combination of contiguous components. Example (18) shows how negated SVC may be ambiguous. The scope of negation can be disambiguated only by context (Bruce 1988: 27–8).

Alamlbak (Bruce 1988: 27)

(18) ritm fiñji tandhi-ak-ni-r- mê-t-m
insects neg roast-get-go irr-rem.past-3sgf-3pl

‘She did not roast (and) get the insects (and) go’; or
‘She took them unroasted’; or
‘She roasted the insects and went having left them’ (did not take them); or
‘She roasted and got the insects but did not go’; or
‘She left them uncooked and went’ (scope: roast-get); or
‘She roasted them, didn’t take them and didn’t go’ (scope: get-go).

Along similar lines, negation in Ewe (§5.2 of Chapter 5) is marked once per SVC. It can have scope either over V1, or V2, or both, as in examples (27a–c) in Chapter 5.

Alternatively, components of an SVC have to take the same negative marking. An example from Anyi-Sanvi is in (19).

Anyi-Sanvi (Van Leynseele 1975: 191–2)

(19) cuá fi ní ak ô ní
dog neg+catch+hab chicken neg+eat+hab

‘The dog never eats a chicken’ (lit. catch-eat)

In contrast, a coordinate structure—containing the same verbs—can contain a negative and a positive verb:

Anyi-Sanvi

(20) cuá cí ak ô nígu ô
dog catch+hab chicken he+neg+kill+hab it

‘The dog catches a chicken and does not kill it’

Just occasionally, a negator may behave differently. In Barai (Papuan) the negator ba negates the entire SVC. The other, naebe, negates the whole SVC, if it is contiguous, as in (21). It can negate components of a noncontiguous SVC separately, as in (22) and (23).

Barai (Foley and Olson 1985: 40)

(21) fu fase [naebe fí isoe]
he letter neg sit write
‘He did not sit and write a letter’

(22) fu [naebe fí] fase isoe
he neg sit letter write
‘He did not sit down, but did write a letter’
(23) fu fi fase [naebe isoe]
   he sit letter NEG write
   ‘He sat down, but did not write a letter’

Barai also has a negator, ba, which negates the whole SVC and does not have any special scope effects. So far no serializing language has been encountered where all the negators could have such scope effect.

2.5. SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTION AS ‘ONE EVENT’

In Lord’s (1974: 196–7) words, in a serializing language such as Yoruba, ‘the verbs in the construction all refer to sub-parts or aspects of a single overall event’. In addition, in an SVC, ‘the action or state denoted by the second verb phrase is, in terms of the real world, an outgrowth of the action denoted by the action of the first verb phrase; the second verb phrase represents a further development, a consequence, result, goal, or culmination of the action named by the first verb’. Noonan (1985: 77; 1992: 211) also points out that SVCs contain ‘just one assertion’—in contrast to coordinate and subordinate clauses. Along similar lines, the SVC in (3), from Taba, describes a simple event represented by a causal chain, while the coordinate structure at (14) is a sequence of actions (events), which may be semantically linked together or not, depending on the context.\footnote{What is defined as single-scene serial verb constructions in Kalam (Pawley and Lane 1998) describe one event and have all the criterial properties of serial verb constructions: they are spoken ‘under a single intonational contour, without perceptible internal pause’ (p. 205) and share all arguments. ‘Multi-scene’ serial verb constructions which allow a pause between some components and refer to acts taking place at different locations appear to be problematic: they can be viewed as an intermediate type between one clause and a clause sequence, rather than being canonical serial verb constructions.}

The notion of ‘single event’ is not easy to define since the exact boundary between a single event and a macro-event consisting of several subevents is fuzzy (see, for instance, the discussion in Schultze-Berndt 2000: 36–7; and Pawley and Lane 1998). A useful definition is provided by Schultze-Berndt (2000: 36): a single event is viewed as ‘conceptual representation, as linguistically encoded, which can be assigned boundaries, and/or a “location”, in time’. But there is more to it than that.

Combining verbs into an SVC may turn out to be unacceptable if they do not match a ‘recognizable event-type’ (Durie 1997: 322; Jarkey 1991: 169). In other words, ‘event typicality is a cultural phenomenon’, and it ‘impacts directly upon the productive assembly of SVCs . . . as well as the interpretation of the semantics of verb serialisation’ (Enfield 2002: 232). This issue is taken up in §7 of Chapter 7. Serial verb constructions ‘must relate only events which are somehow conceived as notably more commonly associated together in experience or those events which form a culturally important concatenation of events. These events [called here ‘subevents’—A.Y.A.] are conceived of as a single unitary event’ (Bruce 1988: 28). This is again different from sequences of clauses. As Bruce puts it, ‘any sequence of events may be talked about in juxtaposed clauses . . . but not every sequence of
events may be described with a serial construction. Example (24), from Alamblak, is an acceptable SVC which describes a conventionalized sequence of subevents:

**Alamblak** (Bruce 1988: 29)

(24) miy̱t ɾɪtm  muh-ha̱mbray-an-m
    tree insects  climb-search-for-1sg-3pl
    ‘I climbed the tree searching for insects’

In contrast, (25) is not acceptable to native speakers of Alamblak. This is so ‘not only because it is unusual for the two events to occur together, but because there is no apparent reason for their close association since stars are observable from the ground’. (Bruce 1988: 29)

**Alamblak**

(25) *miy̱t ʁuŋ̱m  muh-hëti-an-m
    tree stars  climb-see-1sg-3pl
    ‘I climbed the tree seeing the stars’

Only if a rationale for linking the two subevents together can be provided, does an SVC become acceptable:

**Alamblak**

(26) miy̱t ʁuŋ̱m  muh-hità̱ marṉa-an-m
    tree stars  climb-see-well-1sg-3pl
    ‘I climbed the tree seeing the stars clearly’

Based on these examples, Bruce (1988: 30) modifies his semantic–pragmatic constraints on verb combinations in SVCs as follows: ‘Serialisation of roots in a verb stem is restricted to sequences of events which are commonly associated culturally or for which there is a cultural basis or pragmatic reason for their close association’.

Semantic and pragmatic constraints on verb combinations may result in semantic noncompositionality of SVCs. In Tariana, an SVC which literally translates as ‘he-sleeps he-eats he walks around’ means ‘go hunting or fishing for several days’ (see §3.2 of Chapter 8). This is a conventionalized way of describing a traditional fishing or hunting expedition. The meaning of the whole is not equal to the sum of meanings of the components, and none of the components can be substituted with another verb. A sequence of conventionalized subevents associated with the traditional activity of fishing has become lexicalized.

Similar examples abound in serializing languages. In White Hmong, ‘dance’ and ‘listen to music’ are normally viewed as distinct events, and thus cannot form one SVC. But the actions of ‘blowing bamboo pipes’ and ‘dancing’ are inseparable; they form one event, and can be combined into an SVC (Jarkey 1991: 169; and Durie 1997: 329). A function of verb serialization is then to represent complex events, which are—at least partly—a cultural construct. This is somewhat similar
to how the ‘name-worthiness’ of an activity provides a reason for nominal and verbal lexical compounds: for instance, in English, compounds like mountain-climbing or berry-picking are coined as names of recognizable activities. A new compound, for example, ladder-climbing, makes one immediately suspect that it must refer to an activity recognized as such in some context (see Mithun 1984: 848). In this sense, SVCs, just like compounds, may have a lexical status. Co-conceptualization of culturally associated events thus leads to the creation of idiomatic combinations, and different degrees of lexicalization in SVCs whose components come from large open classes—see §3.4.1.

Noncompositional meanings of SVCs in which one component comes from a grammatically defined class are of a different kind. In his brief but incisive analysis of (1), from Baule, Creissels (2000) points out the impossibility of interpreting this SVC as a sequence of actually ‘taking’ something and ‘showing it’. The construction in (1) describes one composite action; the verb ‘take’ in the construction introduces a nominal argument. Serial verb constructions of this kind are not a series of subevents. They are semantically headed structures which refer to an event described by the main verb, from an open class, while the verb of a closed class simply provides some grammatical specification. The pathways of grammaticalization in these structures are discussed in §3.4.1.

In summary: semantically, serial verb constructions may encode one event, or several subevents closely linked together, or even several subevents in sequence which may be conceptualized as connected to each other. In the latter case, it may appear hard to draw a tight semantic distinction between a monoclusal serial verb construction and a sequence of clauses. Cross-linguistically, and even within one language, SVCs occupy different places on the continuum, between one indissoluble event and a package of subevents all linked together. The place of a serial verb construction on this continuum correlates with grammatical parameters—such as contiguity and wordhood of components, and argument sharing.

SVCs usually describe an event or a process, rather than a state. Verbs referring to states and not to events have little chance of appearing in an SVC (see §6).

2.6. SHARING ARGUMENTS IN SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

Prototypical serial verb constructions share at least one argument.° Serial verb constructions with no shared arguments are comparatively rare, but not non-existent (this is contrary to Baker’s 1989 assumptions: see criticism by Durie 1997; and Appendix).

° We distinguish between core arguments (‘the basic, conceptually necessary arguments of a verb, as specified in its lexical entry’) and peripheral arguments (obliques or adjuncts, which are less dependent on the nature of the verb and may be optionally included; see Dixon and Aikhenvald 2000). For the discussion of sharing core and peripheral arguments in SVCs, see Schachter (1974); Noonan (1985); Foley and Olson (1985: 24–5); Schiller (1990a, 1990b), Durie (1997: 291), Bowden (2001) and Bradshaw (1999).
A prototypical SVC has an overall argument structure which is not more complex than that of one of its components. All the core and peripheral arguments may belong to the whole construction. Components of SVCs with instrumental or comitative meanings—such as (10) in Chapter 11 from Tetun Dili, ‘Grandfather used the knife to cut the bread’ (literally, ‘grandparent take knife cut bread), may appear to have different objects. However, the SVC has one overall argument structure. ‘Knife’ would be the object of ‘take’, if ‘take’ were used as a predicate on its own. However, ‘take’ is part of an SVC, and it imparts an instrumental meaning to the whole construction which now has three arguments: A (‘he’), O (‘bread’), and instrument (‘knife’).

Similar examples are (1) from Baule, (15) from Lango and (45) from Saramacan Creole. In (24) and (26), from Alamblak, the arguments (‘tree’, ‘insects’ and ‘stars’) also belong to the whole construction (Bruce 1984: 165; similar examples from Yimas are discussed by Foley 1991: 331 and Foley and Olson 1985: 33). Alternatively, individual components of SVCs can have their own direct or indirect objects, at least at one level of analysis: see §2.1.2 of Chapter 6, on Eastern Kayah Li.

The arguments of an SVC are not a simple sum of arguments of its components; moreover, a verb which is transitive when used on its own may become less transitive in an SVC. For instance, the verb tị́ ‘hit’ in Igbo requires two objects when it occurs on its own, as in (27a), while in (27b), an SVC with ‘hit’ as a component has only one object:

Igbo (Lord 1975: 28, 33–4)

(27) (a) ó tị́-ri nwóké áhụ ọkpo
  he hit-tense man that blow
  ‘He hit that man’ (lit. he hit that man a blow)

(b) ó tị́-gbù-rù nwóké áhụ
  he hit-kill-tense man that
  ‘He beat that man to death’ (lit. hit-kill)

Serial verb constructions typically do not allow duplicate roles (that is, they tend not to have two different agents, two direct objects, or two instruments—see Durie 1997: 340–1). In Jabêm and in Numbami (Oceanic: Bradshaw 1999), a sequence ‘we-carry taro we-carry bananas’ (where pronominal prefixes signal subject agreement) cannot be analysed as a single SVC, since it contains two different objects, ‘taro’ and ‘bananas’. But this is by no means universal (pace Durie 1997, and Baker 1989; see Appendix). Components of SVCs may have either different objects, as in (28) below (§3.1 of Chapter 2)

6 Such constructions are also known as ‘multiple object’ serial verb constructions; see Crowley (1987: 39) and Foley and Olson (1985: 44). The property of sharing arguments within a serial verb construction is known as a ‘fused’ argument structure.
and examples (12a) and (14) of Chapter 5 from Ewe, or different locative arguments (as in White Hmong: Jarkey 1991; Durie 1997: 342). Further examples are in Numbami (Bradshaw 1993: 148), Hmong (Bisang 1992: 285), and Mandarin Chinese (Chan 2002).

Cantonese

(28) ngo\(^5\) bong\(^3\) lei\(^5\) daa\(^2\) din\(^6\)-waa\(^2\)

I help you make phone-call

‘I’ll make a phone call for you’ (lit. help you by making the call)

All serializing languages appear to have at least one type of SVC whose components have the same subjects. Most examples of SVCs discussed so far are of this kind (see (1–2) and (4–11)). Sometimes, different underlying subjects are coded into the surface structure as the same subjects, as in Tariana (see (53) below and examples (13), (21), and (22) in Chapter 8), and (52), from Akan. SVCs with shared subjects are the major type of SVCs in any language. If a language has SVCs, it is to be expected that in most types the subjects of the components will be the same. Other SVCs which share non-subject arguments or do not share any arguments at all (e.g. event-argument constructions: see Table 1) are even more rare cross-linguistically and rather peripheral in individual languages. Subject sharing can thus be considered a feature of prototypical SVCs. Table 1 summarizes the properties of SVCs with non-identical subjects. These will now be discussed one at a time. The parameters of variation for these verbs cover shared arguments (other than the subject), the transitivity of components, constituent order, composition (see §3.1) and semantics.

I. Switch-function SVCs

The subject of one component of an SVC can be identical to a non-subject constituent of the other component. SVCs where the object of V1 is the same as the subject of V2 will be referred to as switch-function SVCs.\(^7\)

Ia. Cause–effect SVCs In switch-function cause–effect serial verb constructions both components are often chosen from open classes (this is not always the case: they are restricted in Goemai ( (vii) in §2, of Chapter 3) and in Tetun Dili

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\(^7\) These have been called ‘switch-subject’ serial verb constructions. The term ‘switch-function’ is preferred here, since these constructions presuppose the identity between arguments in two different functions, rather than a ‘switch’ between two subjects. Switch-function serial verb constructions are also known as ‘pivotal’ constructions, since Chao (1968: 124f.; cf. also Li and Thompson 1981: 607, and Bisang 1992: 191). Chao’s definition of a pivotal construction is as follows:

A pivotal construction consists of a succession of a verbal expression V1, a nominal expression, and another verbal expression V2, with the nominal expression serving at once as object of V1 and subject of V2, as: Womn p Barrier zuo daibiao ‘We delegate him to be representative’, where tâ is the object of pài and subject of zuo daibiao.
Table 1. Properties of SVC with different subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of SVC</th>
<th>Shared arguments</th>
<th>Transitivity of components</th>
<th>Constituent order</th>
<th>Composition</th>
<th>Semantics</th>
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<tr>
<td>I. Switch-function SVCs</td>
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<td>Ia. Cause–effect SVCs</td>
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<td>V₁-transitive</td>
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<td>cause–effect, benefactive;</td>
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<td>V₂-intransitive,</td>
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<td>accompaniment instrument;</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>rarely transitive</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>iconic (V₁ = cause,</td>
<td>V₁ = cause, V₂ =</td>
<td>symmetrical</td>
<td>cause–effect, benefactive;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V₂ =) (very few</td>
<td>intransitive,</td>
<td></td>
<td>accompaniment instrument;</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>exceptions)</td>
<td>rarely transitive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ib. Causative SVCs</td>
<td>O of V₁ = S/A of</td>
<td>V₁-transitive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>causative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V₂</td>
<td>V₂-intransitive,</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>rarely transitive</td>
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<td>V₁ of causation–V₂</td>
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<td>(some: reverse order)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ic. Simultaneous</td>
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<td>V₁-transitive</td>
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<td>experencer SVCs</td>
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<td>V₂-intransitive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Id. Switch-function</td>
<td>S of V₁ = O of V₂</td>
<td>V₁-intransitive</td>
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<tr>
<td>consecutive SVCs</td>
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<td>V₂-transitive</td>
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<td>too few examples</td>
<td>symmetrical</td>
<td>consecutive</td>
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<td>to generalize</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ie. Complement clause</td>
<td>O of V₁ = S/A of</td>
<td>V₁-transitive;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>complementation strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>serialization</td>
<td>V₂</td>
<td>V₂-intransitive or</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>transitive</td>
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<tr>
<td>II. Cumulative subject</td>
<td>S/A of V₂ = S/A of</td>
<td>no restrictions</td>
<td>V₁–V₂</td>
<td>symmetrical</td>
<td>consecutive; result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVCs</td>
<td>V₁</td>
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<tr>
<td>III. Event-argument</td>
<td></td>
<td>one verb transitive</td>
<td>modifying verb</td>
<td>asymmetrical</td>
<td>manner; location; time</td>
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<tr>
<td>SVCs</td>
<td></td>
<td>or intransitive, the</td>
<td>precedes or follows</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>other intransitive</td>
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<tr>
<td>IV. Resultative SVCs</td>
<td></td>
<td>V₁-transitive or</td>
<td>too few examples</td>
<td>symmetrical</td>
<td>result</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>intransitive, V₂-</td>
<td>to generalize</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>intransitive</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
V2 describes the result, or the effect, of V1. The most frequently quoted cases of switch-function cause–effect SVCs involve a transitive verb followed by an intransitive, as in (3) above, and (29) ( (13) in Chapter 10), from Mwotlap.

Mwotlap

(29) Tali mi-tit teňteň Kevin
    Tali per-punch cry:redup Kevin
    ‘Tali made Kevin cry by punching him’

In some languages, as in Cantonese (see §3.2 of Chapter 2), V2 is always intransitive. In others, switch-function cause–effect SVCs may consist of two transitive verbs, as in (18) in Chapter 6 from Eastern Kayah Li.

The order of components in cause–effect SVCs is iconic: the verb expressing causation precedes the verb of result; that is, the order tends to replicate the order of occurrence of subevents.

Ib. Causative SVCs. Switch-function causative SVCs are a widespread device for causative formation (see Lord 1974, for a discussion of causatives in Yoruba and arguments in favour of their analysis as SVCs; further examples are found in Lahu: Matisoff (1969: 70); Alamblak: Bruce (1988: 37–8); Lewo: Early (1993), and Manambu: Aikhenvald (forthcoming); also see the discussion of SVCs and increasing valency in §3.2.5). They typically consist of a verb of causation followed by lexical verb, as in (30) from Tetun Dili ((11) in Chapter 11); (24) and (25) in Chapter 2 from Cantonese, and (30) from Chapter 13 in Olutec.

Tetun Dili

(30) labele fo sai lia ne’e!
    NEG.can give exit voice this
    ‘You can’t reveal this matter!’

8 Causative serial verb constructions are asymmetrical, while cause–effect serial verb constructions tend to be symmetrical. That is, in a causative serial verb construction, the verb of causation always comes from a closed set of transitive verbs. The order of components in causative SVCs is not always iconic; while in cause–effect serialization it tends to be so. There is some semantic overlap between causative serial verb constructions and cause–effect serial verb constructions. In addition, in a number of languages the difference between causative SVCs and cause–effect SVCs is not at all clear-cut. There are often hardly any syntactic differences between the two, and the set of verbs of causation in causative switch-function SVCs may be quite large. This appears to be the case in Hmong, Vietnamese, and Lahu (Matisoff 1973; and discussion by Bisang 1992: 191–8; 279–85; 320; 379). In these languages both causative and cause–effect SVCs are symmetrical.

In other cases, as in Gurr-goni (Green 1995: 284) and in Tamambo (Jauncey 1997), causative switch-function SVCs and cause–effect SVCs may both be considered asymmetrical, since the verbs which can occur in each construction come from a restricted set. No example of a language with causative serial verb constructions as symmetrical constructions and cause–effect verbs as asymmetrical has been attested.
The order of constituents in causative SVCs is nearly always iconic: the verb of causation precedes the other verb, as in most examples above. Just occasionally, the verb of causation follows the other verb, as in (31), from Yimas. The subject of wul ‘be afraid’ is identical to the object of cay ‘try to make’; and also to the subject of pra ‘come’.

Yimas (Foley and Olson 1985: 25)

(31) na-bu-wul-cay-pra-kiak  
3sgO-3sgS-afraid-try.to.make-come-remote.past  
‘They tried to make him afraid as he came’

Ic. Simultaneous experiencer SVCs can be analysed as a variation on switch-function. They consist of a transitive verb followed by an intransitive. The object of V1 is identical to the subject (S) of V2; and it is the undergoer of the action of V1. There is no straightforward cause–effect relationship—see (32), from Gurr-goni.

Gurr-goni (Green 1995: 283)

(32) njirr-re+rrmi-rri njiwurr-ma-nay  
3MINA.1AUGO-pound 1AUGS-go.along-PRE  
gut-djadi wana 3CLASSIV-rain big  
‘We went along being pelted by heavy rain’, or ‘The heavy rain pounded on us as we were going along’ (lit. [big rain pounded us]-[(while) we went])

Id. Switch-function consecutive SVCs are semantically similar to cause–effect verbs. They involve an intransitive verb followed by a transitive verb; the S of V1 is equivalent to the O of V2, as in (33), from Olutec ((31), Chapter 13). (Similar examples are found in Numbami: Bradshaw 1993). Both switch-function consecutive and simultaneous experiencer SVCs are rare.

Olutec

(33) je? ?u:ra=xü=k kata ta=ya:x?-mü:+min?-i sara: that hour=REP=ANIM Cata c3(erg)=scream-bring-compl.dep Sara  
‘Sara was screaming at the time Cata brought her’

Ie. Complement clause serialisation Switch-function SVCs are used for complement clause serialization in productively serializing languages—such as Eastern Kayah Li (example (23), Chapter 6) and Goemai (see examples (15a–b) in Chapter 3, and Cantonese (examples (12–13) in Chapter 2); also see Bisang (1992: 377–8, 438–9, for examples of Vietnamese). Some complement clause structures are superficially similar to verb serialization, but can be shown to be different constructions (as in Hmong: Jarkey 1991: 328–80). In Cantonese, constructions
like that in (12), from Chapter 2, (‘I am inviting them for dinner’, literally ‘I invite they eat rice’) are indeterminate; they can be analysed as either SVCs or as biclausal paratactic structures.

II. Cumulative subject SVCs
The subject referents of the components of an SVC do not have to be identical: in a number of languages their referents overlap. In (34), from Paamese, the subject marking on the second verb (first person dual inclusive) covers the subject and the object of the first verb. The opposite order of components is found in Mwotlap (see example (14), §3.2 of Chapter 10). Known as ‘cumulative subject’ SVCs, this phenomenon is somewhat similar to that of subjects with overlapping referents which can be marked as same subjects in switch-reference systems (Reesink 1983: 236).

Paamese (Oceanic subgroup of Austronesian: Crowley 1987: 48)

\[(34) \text{ma-kuri-ko} \quad \text{lo-va-haa} \]
\[1sg+IMMED-take-2sg \quad 1du/inc-IMMED-go \]

‘I will take you away with me’ (lit. I take you-we(dual inclusive) go)

A similar example is (10) in §2.1 of Chapter 5 from Ewe; further semantic possibilities of cumulative subjects are discussed there. Cumulative subjects have been reported for a number of Oceanic languages (e.g. Lewo: Early 1993; Numbami: Bradshaw 1993, 1999; and Tamambo: Jauncey 1997; also see Crowley 2002), and Ndje`bbana (Australian area: McKay 2000: 286–7), and also for Dumo (example (36) in Chapter 9).

III. Event-argument serial verb constructions
Event-argument SVCs are a type of SVC with no shared arguments. The event or state denoted by one component is predicated on the entire situation referred to by an SVC. Event-argument SVCs provide the manner, temporal order or locational specification for the other component.\(^9\) Typical examples of event-argument serialization are (35), from Paamese, (27–28) in Chapter 6 from Eastern Kayah Li, examples under F in §3.1 in Chapter 8 from Tariana, and in §4.3 of Chapter 10, from Mwotlap. In Oceanic languages the ‘modifying’ V2 carries a third person singular subject prefix (no matter whether there is a third person singular nominal constituent earlier in the SVC or not). These constructions have all the definitional properties of SVCs outlined in §2.1–5.

\(^9\) This phenomenon was first described as ‘modifying’ serialization, by Bamgboye (1974: 36), and then as ‘ambient’ serialization, by Crowley (1987: 40–1, and 2002). The term ‘adverbial serialization’ was introduced by Bradshaw (1993: 152). In these constructions, ‘serialised verb is a predication about the event itself, not about any particular participant in the event’ (Bradshaw 1993: 153); also see Bradshaw (1983: 189). The term ‘ambient’ comes from Chafe (1970: 101–2), to refer to verbs making a general predication about the world, without any reference to particular participants. In Kwa languages, corresponding meanings are expressed with sequences of clauses (called ‘overlapping clause’ by Ameka forthcoming).
Paamese (Crowley 1987: 40)

(35) Kihulin ato kail hemal
(ki-hulii-nV atoo kaile he-malu)
\[2^{\text{sg-dist-count-obj}} \text{ chicken} \quad \text{pl} \quad 3^{\text{sg-dist-be.correct}}\]
‘You count the chickens correctly’ (lit, you count chickens it be correct)

Event-argument constructions in Paamese also express similarity (36) and accompaniment (37) (see Crowley 1987: 54–5, for further discussion of the verbs tali and savali and how these are used in SVCs). Further discussion of event-argument SVCs in Paamese and a few other Oceanic languages is in Crowley (2002: 41–2, 61).

Paamese (Crowley 1987: 54–5)

(36) kaiko ko-seluusi suvali eehono kail
2^{\text{sg}} 2^{\text{sg-real+speaker}} 3^{\text{sg-real+resemble}} \text{ child} \quad \text{pl}
‘You speak like children’ (lit. you speak it resembles children)

(37) ko-na-titu-teo na-tali-nau
2^{\text{sg-prohib-fight-prohib}} 3^{\text{sg+pot-accompany-1sg}}
‘Don’t fight with me’ (lit. don’t fight it accompany me)

Semantically, event-argument SVCs are similar to constructions with manner adverbs. They often undergo changes: see §3.4.1, Aikhenvald (2000b) and Jauncey (1997), on how a modifying component in such SVCs may develop into an adverb. This instability could be due to their unusual status with respect to bona fide SVCs which share arguments. Alternatively, adverbial SVCs may develop into same-subject SVCs. This is reported for Paamese by Crowley (1987: 55): the verb of accompaniment tali—shown in (37)—is beginning to be used in a same subject contiguous SVC with one person marker per construction, and in a same subject non-contiguous SVC with same subject marking on both components.

IV. Resultative SVCs
An additional, rare type of SVC without any shared arguments is the resultative SVC whereby V2 refers to the effect of V1 upon a participant; both verbs are intransitive. Semantically, these SVCs are reminiscent of cause–effect serialization. See (38) (example (18) from Chapter 10), and examples (16)–(17) in the same chapter, from Mwotlap.10

Bradshaw (1983: 190) discusses similar examples in Jabém. Serial verb constructions with resultative semantics in other languages share subjects and objects, as in:

(i) wife fërgëngi-mè-t-a
wind blow-cold-REMOTE.PAST-3sgf(S)-1sg(O)
‘The wind blew and I was cold’ (or: the wind blew on me and I was cold)
Mwotlap

(38) nek mi-tig melémleg na-lo den kemem
2sg per-stand black art-sun from 1exc:pl

‘Standing as you are, you’re hiding the sun from us’ (lit. You are standing dark the sun from us)

What is shared between the two components of such SVCs is the situation they describe. No language has been found which would have these as the only type of SVC.

It has also been claimed that some languages can have SVCs with different subjects sharing direct objects (see Bradshaw 1983: 190; Bisang 1986: 155, for the discussion of Jabeêm, and Chang 1990: 295–6). Whether such constructions are indeed SVCs or coordinate constructions requires further investigation.

2.7. FURTHER PROPERTIES OF SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

Serial verb constructions typically share the marking of command, as in Alamblak (Bruce 1984: 168). In Tariana, cohortative ma ‘let’s (do something)’ and wasă ‘let’s go’ have the whole SVC within their scope (see example (15) in Chapter 8). In Siane (Papuan: James 1983: 51), the focus clitic goes onto the first component of an SVC, characterizing it as a whole. In Alamblak, directional affixes have scope over the whole SVC; for instance, the ‘elevational’ prefix applies to all the components in an SVC (while in subordinate clauses, its scope is just the verb of which it is a constituent: Bruce 1988: 26–7).

In many serializing languages, components of SVCs cannot be questioned separately (this is the case in White Hmong: Jarkey 1991, pace Riddle 1990: 66). As shown in §5.3 of Chapter 5, this is not the case in Ewe and a number of other West African languages, where components of SVCs can be questioned and focused separately. When repeated, an SVC cannot usually be reduced to just one verb.

Unlike coordinate or subordinate structures, SVCs cannot, by definition, contain any marker of syntactic dependency. They can, however, include a special marker which distinguishes an SVC from other types of constructions but does not mark any dependency relations between the components. In Khwe (see §5 of Chapter 4), every verb in an SVC except the last one takes a morpheme whose only function is marking the verb as a component of an SVC. In Mwotlap (see §2.4 of Chapter 10) a few verbs have different forms depending on whether they occur on their own or as V1, on the one hand; or as V2 in an SVC, on the other. Such ‘SVC specific forms’ help to distinguish SVCs from other multiverb structures in a language.

11 A possible exception in Yimas is discussed by Foley (1991: 326) where verb stems in a serial verb construction require a linker also employed in verb sequencing. The linker is desemanticized in these constructions.
The order of components in SVCs may match the temporal order of actions they denote. This iconic ordering is almost universal in SVCs describing a sequence of actions, as in (6) from Tariana, or those describing cause–effect relationships, as in (3), from Taba. In SVCs which express grammatical meanings, for instance, aspect or comparison (see (17) from Lango), the order of components follows grammatical rules rather than iconic principles—see §3.4.2.12

SVCs may consist of two or more components. Multi-component SVCs are at (5), from Daw (Makú), and (6), from Tariana. Multi-component SVCs may represent sequences of subevents conceptualized as one event. Or they can be internally structured (see discussion in Chapter 16). There are language-specific limits on how many verbs can form a serial construction, and what the structural possibilities are. See §3.4.2, on the internal structure of SVCs of different kinds.

3. Composition and semantics of serial verb constructions

3.1. Asymmetrical and symmetrical serial verb constructions

In terms of their composition, serial verb constructions fall into two broad classes. (For the sake of simplicity, we here discuss two-component verbs; the same generalizations apply to multverb SVCs.) They may consist of one verb from a relatively large, open or otherwise unrestricted class, and another from a semantically or grammatically restricted (or closed) class. These are asymmetrical serial constructions (Aikhenvald 1999a; this roughly corresponds to what Durie 1995, 1997 called ‘unbalanced’ constructions). Asymmetrical SVCs denote a single event described by the verb from a non-restricted class. The verb from a closed class provides a modificational specification: it is often a motion or posture verb expressing direction, or imparting a tense–aspect meaning to the whole construction. Semantic sub-classes of asymmetrical SVCs are discussed in §3.2.

A directional, or deictic, asymmetrical SVC in Cantonese is illustrated at (29) of Chapter 2 (repeated as (39) below).

Cantonese

you take PL clothing come
‘Bring some clothes’

12 Further constraints on serial verb constructions have been suggested. According to Awoyale (1987: 22), an SVC cannot consist of several occurrences of the same verb, or of synonymous verbs. But see examples of synonymous verb serialization in §3.3.4 of this chapter; cf. Schiller (1990a: 38) and Riddle (1990). Synonymous serial verb constructions in Khwe are discussed in §3.1.4 of Chapter 4.
The motion verb 'come' as V2 provides directional specification to the SVC: 'take come' means 'bring.' The transitivity value of an asymmetrical SVC is usually the same as that of the verb from an unrestricted class. This verb can then be considered the head of the construction, on both semantic and syntactic grounds (the notion of 'head' was defined by Nichols 1986; also see Déchaine 1993, on 'headedness' in serializing structures in Igbo). And see §4.1 of Chapter 2, and §3.2 of Chapter 12, for discussion of asymmetrical SVCs and their headed structure in Cantonese and in Toqabaqita). The order of components typically depends on the construction type.

The verb from an open class will be called the 'major' verb. The term 'minor verb' will refer to the verb chosen from a grammatically restricted class (terms from Durie 1997). Minor verbs in asymmetrical SVCs tend to get grammaticalized (see §3.4). A grammaticalized 'minor' verb can still retain full lexical status in the language outside the constructions in which it has been grammaticalized. One such example is the verb na 'give' in Ewe which is widely used as a Recipient/ Benefactive marker, and also as a full lexical verb (as shown by Ameka 2002: 2, pace Lord 1993: 41).

All components of symmetrical SVCs come from unrestricted classes. Unlike asymmetrical SVCs, the order of components tends to be iconic, reflecting the temporal sequence of subevents (e.g. Durie 1997: 331–5). Symmetrical serial constructions are not 'headed' in the way asymmetrical ones are: all their components have equal status in that none of them determines the semantic or syntactic properties of the construction as a whole. Examples include (24) and (26), from Alamblak, and (5)–(11) in Chapter 4 from Khwe. Symmetrical SVCs often get lexicalized and become idiom-like (see §3.4).

3.2. SEMANTICS OF ASYMMETRICAL SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

Asymmetrical SVCs are used to express a wide variety of meanings, outlined below. Further studies of productively serializing languages will enable us to determine further semantic groups of SVCs. The order in which languages tend to acquire asymmetrical SVCs of varied semantic groups is discussed in §6.

3.2.1. Direction and orientation

This kind of serial verb construction (also known as 'deictic'; cf. Givon 1991: 139) is extremely common in most productively serializing languages (but see §6). The minor verb is typically a verb of motion or movement with orientational semantics. Alternatively, the minor verb may refer to the location of the event, or to path (see §3.1 of Chapter 9). In (39) above, from Cantonese, 'take-come' means

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13 Due to limitations of space, I will only mention the recurrent semantic functions related to particular closed sub-classes of verbs; a detailed discussion of what function or what meaning goes with what verb is a matter for future study. The wide variety of semantic types and functions of serial verb constructions goes against some suggestions, such as Andrews and Manning (1999), who argue for a basic binary division of serial verb constructions into 'auxiliary' and 'argument adding.'
'bring'. The first part of the SVC in (6), from Tariana, consists of the major verb 'take' and the minor verb expressing direction, 'make cross'. The meaning of the whole SVC is 'take across'. Similar examples are (19) in Chapter 3 from Goemai; examples (12–14) in Chapter 4 from Khwe; examples (24) and (27) in Chapter 5 from Ewe; examples (15–17) in Chapter 6 of Eastern Kayah Li; examples in §7 of Chapter 7 from Thai; examples in §3.1 and Table 2 in Chapter 8 from Tariana; examples in §3.1 of Chapter 9 from Dumo; examples in §4.1 in Chapter 10 from Mwotlap; examples in §3.1 in Chapter 11 from Tetun Dili; examples in §3 in Chapter 13 from Olutec; and examples in §3.1 in Chapter 14 from Lakota.

3.2.2. Aspect, extent, and change of state
Asymmetrical serial verb constructions often express asceptual meanings. Motion or posture verbs may be used to impart the semantics of progressive, continuative or habitual meanings (see James 1983: 51, on Siane, and Table 3 in Chapter 8, for some correlations between different verbs and the asceptual meanings they impart in Tariana). Asceptual SVCs are also found in Khwe (§3.2.2 of Chapter 4), Eastern Kayah Li (Table 3 in Chapter 6), Thai (§4 of Chapter 7), Dumo (b) in §3.1 in Chapter 9), Tetun Dili (§5.1 of Chapter 11), and Lakota (§3.1 of Chapter 14). Asceptual meanings expressed with SVCs may correlate with tense; but so far I have not found an example of an SVC used just for expressing tense. In Khwe, the verb 'become' as part of an SVC marks change of state.

Verbs of completion usually mark completive aspect, as does kaba 'finish' in Kristang, a Portuguese-based creole. Similar examples are found in most chapters below (e.g. Table 3, in Chapter 6, for Eastern Kayah Li).

Kristang (Baxter 1988: 213)

(40) kora yo ja chega nali eli ja kaba bai
when 1sg PER arrive there 3sg PER finish go
'When I arrived there he had gone'

3.2.3. Secondary concept serialization
Dixon (1991: 88) recognizes a class of 'secondary concepts' which can be realized as affixes in some languages, as separate lexemes in some, and as SVCs in others. These concepts provide 'semantic modification of some other verbs, with which they are in a syntactic or a morphological construction'. Secondary-A concepts provide no addition to the semantic roles associated with the verb to which they are related. They include obligation, probability, pretend-type, beginning-type (including 'begin', 'continue', 'finish'), trying-type ('try', 'attempt'), and negators. Asymmetrical SVCs may contain verbs expressing such secondary concepts in the minor slot, as in Tariana (see E in §3.1 and example 24 in Chapter 8), where the minor verb follows the major. In Kristang, the verbs achá 'receive' and toká 'touch' express obligation as minor verbs in SVCs:
Kristang (Baxter 1988: 213)

(41) eli ja acha bai Singapore
    he PERF receive go Singapore
    ‘He has to go to Singapore’

In Ambae and Namakir (Oceanic subgroup of Austronesian: Hyslop 2001: 287; Sperlich 1993) and Anamuxra (Papuan area: Ingram 2001), SVCs also express ability and inability, and other secondary concepts such as ‘pretend’, ‘try’, ‘check’.

Only occasionally is the secondary-A concept of ‘negation’ expressed with SVCs. This appears to be exclusive to Dravidian languages (Steever 1988, and Krishnamurti 2003: 354–7, and p.c.). An SVC contains two finite verbs. The main verb has no restrictions on its semantic or other class. The minor verb, expressing negation, comes from a small lexically defined class (usually just ‘be’, ‘become’). This is illustrated with (42), from Old Tamil (Steever 1988: 42), involving the negative verb ‘not become’. Similar constructions have been described for Old Kannada (Steever 1988: 55).

Old Tamil

(42) cel-v-ēm all-ēm
    go-fut-1pl not.become-1pl
    ‘We will not go’

Secondary-B concepts include ‘want’ and ‘intend’ (these may add an argument: see Dixon 1991: 88). These occur as minor components of SVCs more frequently than Secondary-A concepts: see examples in Cantonese (examples 6–7 in Chapter 2) and Eastern Kayah Li (Table 3 in Chapter 6). In Tariana (see E in §3.1, Chapter 8), SVCs involving secondary-B concepts of wanting and intention differ in the order of components from those involving secondary-A concepts: the minor component in SVCs expressing wanting and intention precedes the major (as in example (23) in Chapter 8).

Unlike the asymmetrical SVCs we have discussed so far, secondary verb serialization may involve larger or smaller classes in the ‘minor’ verb slot. The class of secondary verbs is quite large in Tariana. However, in Ambae, Anamuxra, and Eastern Kayah Li they form smallish classes. What secondary verbs have in common is their semantic dependency: they cannot occur on their own without an additional verb for which they provide semantic modification.

3.2.4. Serialization of complement-clause-taking verbs

Serial verb constructions as a complementation strategy are widely attested in Chinese, Hmong, and other languages of southeast Asia; see discussion under
§2.6 above, and examples (12–13) in Chapter 2 from Cantonese; and (32) in Chapter 13 from Olutec. An example from Vietnamese is:

Vietnamese (Mon-Khmer: Bisang 1992: 320)

(43) anh xem [tời nhảy]
you look I jump
‘Look at how I jump; look at me jumping’

Serialization of verbs of speech is a subtype of verb serialization as a complementation strategy. In Ambae a verb of speech must form an SVC with vo ‘say’ in order to introduce a direct speech complement, as in (44). (Also see Bradshaw 1993: 148, on Numbami; Aikhenvald 1999a, on the obligatory serialization of verbs of speech and perception in Tariana; and similar examples in ‘Oro Nao, a Chapacura language, in Everett and Kern 1997.)

Ambae (Hyslop 2001: 299)

(44) no-mo maraga no-mo veve lawe-a no-vo ‘Mese!’
1sgS-real get up 1sgS-real tell dat 3sgO 1sgS-say Don’t
‘Then I got up and said to him, Don’t!’

Since ‘complement-clause taking’ verbs are a grammatically defined (and thus a restricted class), serialization as a complementation strategy can be considered a type of asymmetrical SVC.

3.2.5. Increasing valency and specifying arguments

Serial verb constructions are often used as valency-increasing mechanisms, to mark causatives, benefactives, instrumentals, and comitatives or sociatives. They are also employed for specifying arguments, that is, to introduce direct objects and various other arguments and obliques. None of these types appears to be restricted to any particular area (contrary to the preliminary hypothesis by Givón 1991: 177, that such SVCs are not found outside West Africa; in fact, they do occur in Papuan and Austronesian languages).

In valency-increasing SVCs, ‘give’ typically forms causative constructions, as in (30) from Tetun Dili (also see §3.4 in Chapter 11) and in Kristang (Baxter 1988: 214) (also see the discussion by Iwasaki et al. 2002). Causative SVCs in Tariana involve verbs ‘make, give, say, let: direct causation’, and ‘order’ (see (53) below, and examples (21) and (13) in Chapter 8). Another causative SVC, with a different order of components, contains the verb ‘put, attend to: indirect causation’ (see (22) in Chapter 8). Causative SVCs may be a subclass of cause–effect SVCs, as in Mwotlap (§4 of Chapter 10), and in Olutec (example (30) in Chapter 13).
BENEFACTIVE SVCs add the role of recipient or beneficiary; they may also involve the verb ‘give’, as in (45) from Saramaccan. In Tariana (C in §3.1 of Chapter 8), these involve verbs ‘do’ and ‘seek’.

Saramaccan (Byrne 1990: 152)

(45) Koñ bi bai dì buku da dì muyé
       Koñ tense buy the book give the woman
‘Koñ had bought the woman the book’

INSTRUMENTAL SVCs often involve the verbs ‘take’ or ‘hold’, as in (46) (see Chapter 11):

Tetun Dili

(46) abó lori tudik ko’a paun
       grandparent take knife cut bread
‘Grandfather used knife to cut the bread’

COMITATIVE or ASSOCIATIVE SVCs involve a verb meaning ‘be with’, as in examples (30–32) in Chapter 9 from Dumo, and in Lewo (Early 1993: 69), and in Tariana (C in §3.1, Chapter 8). The minor verb is postposed to the major verb in Dumo and in Lewo. In Tariana, it is preposted to the major verb (also see examples from Jabêm and White Hmong in Durie 1997: 337). In Tetun Dili the comitative marker goes back to a grammaticalized SVC (§5.5 of Chapter 11); synchronically, this language has no comitative SVCs.

A minor verb in an asymmetrical argument-adding SVC may add a second object, as in (1), from Baule; here the minor verb adds a second argument. In Anyi-Sanvi (Van Leynseele 1975: 202), an SVC is the only way of introducing a definite direct object. SVCs are widely used to express privative in Kristang (Baxter 1988: 212) and Baule (N’Guessan 2000: 85), and location in Lewo (Early 1993: 69).

3.2.6. Reducing valency

Serial verb constructions may have a passive-like function; (47), from Kristang, illustrates the verb toká (whose literary meaning is ‘touch’) as the minor verb in an asymmetrical passive SVC.

Kristang (Baxter 1988: 211)

(47) aké pesi ja toká kumí di gatu
       that fish PERF touch eat SOURCE cat
‘The fish got eaten by the cat’

In Thai and Lao (Chapman 1997: 36), passive SVCs include the verb thûuk ‘touch, come in contact with, strike’. Thai also uses the verb doon ‘collide’
in the same context, to refer to physical events (while *thiuk* can refer to an event of any kind). In Macuna, an East Tucanoan language from Colombia, the passive is expressed in a contiguous SVC involving the causative of the verb *eka* ‘receive’, which follows the major verb (*Smothermon et al.* 1995). In Cantonese, the verb *bei* ‘give’ has grammaticalized as a passive marker (see §5.2.2 of Chapter 2).

Reciprocals can be expressed with SVCs. In Tucano, an East Tucanoan language (*Ramirez* 1997, vol. II: 6), the verb *a’mé* ‘do to each other’ marks reciprocals, for example *a’mé doté* (do.to.each.other hit) ‘hit each other’. Reflexives marked with SVCs in Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages (‘take’ in the minor verb slot) are mentioned by Masica (1976: 146–7). No examples of anti-passives expressed through SVCs have been found so far (this goes together with the fact that scarcely any productively serializing language is syntactically ergative: see §8).

### 3.2.7. Comparatives and superlatives

Serial verb constructions with comparative and superlative meanings typically involve verbs meaning ‘exceed’, as in (9) and (17), from Lango; and in (48), from Goemai (§13f) in Chapter 3).

Goemai

(48) kuma f’yer ma: ni
also become.big(sg) surpass 3sg
‘And (he) has grown bigger than him’

Similar examples are found in Khwe (§3.2.3 of Chapter 4), Ewe (where SVCs also mark comparison of equality and similarity: examples (22) and (23) in Chapter 5), Tariana (D in §3.1 of Chapter 8), Mwotlap (example (24) in Chapter 10), Mupun (Chadic: *Frajzyngier* 1993: 246–8), and Tamambo (*Jauncey* 1997: 381). In Cantonese (§5.2.4 of Chapter 2) and Tetun Dili (§5.3 of Chapter 11) comparative and superlative markers have been grammaticalized from erstwhile minor verbs in SVCs.

### 3.2.8. Event-argument serial verb constructions

Event-argument SVCs (see §2.6, and examples (5), from Daw, and (35–37), from Paamese, above) consist of a verb from a large open class and another verb, from a semantically and/or grammatically restricted class, which provides a manner modification to the event as a whole. In numerous Oceanic languages, such as Mwotlap (§4.3 of Chapter 10), stative verbs and predicative adjectives appear in the minor verb slot in these structures. There is substantial semantic overlap between manner serialization and event-argument SVCs (see §3.2, from Chapter 12, on Tqabaqita). Event-argument SVCs may consist of verbs from semantically unrestricted classes; as a result, Solnit, in his analysis of Eastern Kayah Li (§2.1.6 in Chapter 6), considers them on a par with symmetrical SVCs.
Other, rarely attested, types of asymmetrical SVCs include new event marking in Khwe (where verbs ‘come’ and arrive’ in the V₁ position express focus on the verbal action: see §3.2.6 of Chapter 4), and intensity marking in Dumo whereby a lexicalized symmetrical SVC ‘see-hit’ in V₂ position intensifies the action of the V₁, taken from an open class (see example 39 in Chapter 9).

Various semantic types of asymmetrical SVCs may differ structurally, as they do in Tariana (Tables 4 and 5 in Chapter 8), where each type is assigned its own order of components. In Goemai, SVCs of distinct semantic types differ in terms of marking grammatical categories (see Table 2 in Chapter 3). Table 1, from Chapter 9, summarizes a variety of different grammatical properties for each type of asymmetrical SVC in Dumo. Alternatively, SVCs of different semantics may form one large class, as is the case for ‘concurrent serialization’ in Mwotlap (§4.1 of Chapter 10). ‘Concurrent’ SVCs fall into as many semantic sub-classes as do ‘minor’ verbs which take part in them. Certain types of asymmetrical SVCs may not be synchronically attested in a language: in Toqabaqita (Chapter 12), erstwhile directional minor verbs in SVCs have grammaticalized into directional markers. We return to this in §6.

3.3. Semantics of symmetrical serial verb constructions

The semantic relationships between the components of symmetrical serial verb constructions are as discussed below.

3.3.1. Sequence of actions or concomitant actions related together

The order of components is iconic (that is, it follows the temporal sequence of the sub-events), as in (49), from Ewe (example (26b) in Chapter 5).

Ewe

(49) Ama á-da-nú qú

NAME POT-cook thing eat

‘Ama will cook and eat’

Similar examples are (52) in Chapter 9 from Dumo; and (18), (26), and (27) in Chapter 8 from Tariana; and also in Khwe (§3.1.1 of Chapter 4), Mwotlap (§4.1 of Chapter 10), Eastern Kayah Li (§2.1.3 of Chapter 6), Thai (example (15) in Chapter 7), Lakota (examples (25–27) in Chapter 14), and also in Kalam (Pawley and Lane 1998: 204), Jeh (Gradin 1976), and Kristang (Baxter 1988: 211).

A sequential SVC may acquire purpose reading, as in (21) in Chapter 5 from Ewe. In Goemai (§3.1.1 of Chapter 3) symmetrical SVCs acquire sequential interpretation if V₁ is not a stative verb. If it is, the subevents are interpreted as simultaneous. Symmetrical SVCs with simultaneous and with consecutive interpretation in Cantonese appear with different aspect mark-
ers; the order of components can be reversed (see examples (40–42) in Chapter 2). Sequential SVCs may describe alternating actions which form a complex event, as in:

Mandarin Chinese (Chan 2002)

(50) tai xie³ xin⁴ hui⁴ ke⁴
   he write letter see caller

‘He writes letters and receives callers’ (alternating between the two actions)

3.3.2. **Cause–effect serial verb constructions**

Symmetrical serial verb constructions of this kind most often have iconic constituent order: the verb of causation precedes the verb which refers to the effect, or the result, as in (3) from Taba, (2) from Igbo, and (49), (50), and (51) in Chapter 9 from Dumo, (26) in Chapter 8 from Tariana, and (30) in Chapter 13 from Olutec, and also in Eastern Kayah Li (§2.1.2 of Chapter 6), Khwe (§3.1.3 in Chapter 4) and Mwoatlap (§4.2 in Chapter 10). In Toqabaqita all symmetrical SVCs belong to this type (§3.1 of Chapter 12). Cause–effect SVCs are somewhat similar to causative SVCs: see note 8.

Cause–effect SVCs may have the same subject, as in (26) in Chapter 8 from Tariana. Alternatively, they may be of the switch-function type (see §2.6): that is, the object of the first verb is identical to the subject of the second verb, as in (26–27) in Chapter 2 from Cantonese. Similar examples are in Lahu (Matisoff 1973), and in Ambae (Hyslop 2001: 301).

Cause–effect verbs may have various additional semantic overtones. In Eastern Kayah Li, they can acquire directional interpretation if the V₂ has directional meaning (see examples (15–17) in Chapter 6), e.g. ‘they carry go guns’ means ‘they carry away guns’. The semantic interpretation of an SVC depends on the meaning of the component verbs.

3.3.3. **Manner serial verb constructions**

In symmetrical serial verb constructions, one verb may describe the way in which the action of the other verb was performed, as in (51), from Toqabaqita ( (18), §3.2 of Chapter 12) , (27) in Chapter 5 from Ewe; also see §3.1.2 on Khwe in Chapter 4. Manner serial verbs in Toqabaqita (§3.2 of Chapter 12) are analysed as asymmetrical, since the modifying ‘manner’ verb can only be stative intransitive and thus comes from a restricted class.

Toqabaqita

(51) Wela e giliano-na taqaa baqu
     child 3SG:NFUT pile.soil.around-3:OBJ be.bad banana

‘The child piled the soil around the banana tree badly’
The order of components in manner SVCs is not iconic: it is determined by language specific grammatical rules rather than by any temporal, or logical order of subevents. In Baule, the manner verb always precedes the other verb. Manner verbs in Yoruba (Bamgbọṣe 1974: 36) divide into those that have to precede and those that have to follow the other verb(s).

### 3.3.4. Synonymous verb serialization

Serial verb constructions with synonymous or nearly synonymous verbs are found in a few productively serializing languages. Synonymous verb serialization in Khwe (§3.1.4 in Chapter 4) expresses repetition of the same action (then the verb is repeated as many times as is the action: example (9) in Chapter 4), emphasizes the duration of an action (as in example 10), or intensifies the action (example 11). Serialization of nearly synonymous verbs in White Hmong (Riddle 1990: 68–70) is a stylistic norm for so called ‘elaborate expressions’ whose function is to intensify the action, as in khwy iab khwv daw (toil bitter toil salty) ‘to arduously toil’ and kav teb kav chaw (rule land rule place) ‘to rule a country’. In Kambera (Austronesian: Klamer 1998: 283), the use of nearly synonymous SVCs is a feature of ritual (religious and poetic) language. The meaning of the SVC is idiomatic, e.g. hunju tobung-danya (slaughter.pig slaughter.cow-3person.cont) ‘They were slaughtering’. In this kind of verb serialization, the ordering of components is not iconic.

### 3.4. Asymmetrical and Symmetrical Serial Verb Constructions: A Comparison

Besides their composition, asymmetrical and symmetrical serial verb constructions differ in a number of ways including grammaticalization and lexicalization (§3.4.1), and iconicity of component order (§3.4.2). Some languages appear to lack asymmetrical serial verb constructions: this is the case for Ewe (Chapter 5). Toqabaqita has a very limited number of asymmetrical verbs. Others have no symmetrical verbs, as is the case in Tetun Dili (Chapter 11). We address this in §3.4.1. Common functions of SVCs, and potential problems to do with a binary division of SVCs into two classes, are discussed in §3.4.3.

#### 3.4.1. Grammaticalization and lexicalization in serial verb constructions

Asymmetrical serial verb constructions tend to undergo grammaticalization—the minor verb becomes a grammatical marker. In contrast, symmetrical serial verb constructions tend to become lexicalized and develop idomatic meanings.

A. Typical grammaticalization paths for the minor verb in asymmetrical serial verb constructions include:

I. Development into tense-aspect and mood markers Stance and motion verbs tend to develop into markers of tense-aspect and mood; these may further grammaticalize (cf. Lipski 1993) and become affixes (as in Khwe: §3.3.1 in Chapter...
4) or particles with the same meanings (see §3.4 in Chapter 3, on how most TAM particles in Goemai come from grammaticalized minor verbs in SVCs). The verb ‘finish’ in Toqabaqita (§8 of Chapter 12) has grammaticalized into a completive marker. Cross-linguistically, motion verbs often grammaticalize as aspect markers; ‘go’ often becomes a marker of continuous or habitual aspect (Heine and Kuteva 2002: 155–65), while ‘come’ may become a marker of future or continuous aspect (Heine and Kuteva 2002: 68–78; also see F in §3.4 and Table 3 of Chapter 8, on Tariana). In Thai (§4 of Chapter 7) directional verbs develop aspectual meanings, such as perfect. A variety of verbs in Olutec (§4.2.3 of Chapter 13) have grammaticalized into aktionsart markers, such as iterative, repetitive, and also intensifier. Varied pre-verb markers in Ewe with aspectual, modal, and directional meanings originated in grammaticalized minor verbs (see §1.4 and Table 1 in Chapter 5). In Central Eastern Bantu languages, ‘say’ as a component of asymmetrical SVCs developed into a future marker (Botne 1998). And in Zulu (Heine 1993: 38), the verb ‘be’ grammaticalized into a marker of past progressive. The locative expression ‘be here’ has grammaticalized into a progressive marker in Cantonese (§5.2 of Chapter 2). Components of SVCs rarely develop clearly temporal meanings (except for future); in Goemai (§3.4 from Chapter 3), all past tense markers originate in an SVC. A verb of ‘wanting’ may develop into a marker of future and irrealis, as in Olutec (§4.2.4 of Chapter 13). Just occasionally does a positional verb become an irrealis marker, as does the verb ‘sit’ in Goemai (§3.4 of Chapter 3).

Evidence may be expressed through grammaticalized SVCs. In East-Tucanoan languages (Malone 1988), and possibly in Tariana (Aikhenvald 2003), evidentiality markers could have arisen from the final verb in a contiguous SVC—‘see’ for visual evidentiality, and ‘hear’ for nonvisual.

II. Directionals Motion verbs within asymmetrical SVCs often grammaticalize into directional markers indicating path, source, and trajectory of motion, as in Olutec (§4.2.2 in Chapter 13 and references to other languages there). A similar origin for ‘ventive’ morphemes has been suggested for numerous African languages (Heine and Kuteva 2002). In Toqabaqita (§8 of Chapter 12), verbs ‘come’ and ‘go’ have fully grammaticalized into directional particles.

III. Valency changing morphemes Verbs with the semantics of ‘give’, ‘take’, ‘do’, and ‘make’ may develop into valency changing markers, for example benefactives, as in Toqabaqita (§8 of Chapter 12). This path of development has been
documented for West African, East and Southeast Asian and for Oceanic languages (see, among others, Iwasaki et al. 2002, Chappell and Peyraube 2002, Williams-Van Klinken et al. 2001, and also Bruce 1988, for the development of *hay* ‘give’ into a marker of causative and benefactive in Alamblak).

In Yimas (Foley 1991: 291), the direct causative marker goes back to the grammaticalized verb *tal-* ‘hold’. A benefactive marker in Khwe (§ 3.3.2 of Chapter 4) goes back to the verb ‘distribute to’. Verbs meaning ‘give’ or ‘touch’ can also develop into passive markers (see Peyraube 1996; Bisang 1992, Baxter 1988, among others). In Anamuxra (Ingram 2001) the verb ‘think’ within SVCs has grammaticalized as a benefactive marker. Verbs with the semantics of ‘accompany’ and ‘be/do together’ may develop into comitative applicatives. Further examples and references can be found in Heine and Kuteva (2002: 122), who also present numerous examples of lexical origins for passives. At least in some languages—such as numerous varieties of Chinese—most of these could go back to grammaticalized SVCs (cf. Peyraube 1996: 174–5; and also discussion in Bisang 1992). Olutec (§ 4.2.1 of Chapter 4) shows an unusual development whereby the verbal root *offer, give away* has followed two grammaticalization paths, having developed into a marker of causative, and into a marker of passive.

IV. Adpositions (prepositions and postpositions) Motion verbs within SVCs may develop into directional adpositions—this grammaticalization path for Oceanic languages has been discussed at length by Durie (1988); also see Hamel (1993). Verbs with the semantics of ‘give’, ‘do’, and ‘make’ develop into benefactive and other adpositions or case-markers, while the verb ‘use’ may become an instrumental adposition (see Bowden 2001: 308, on the development of *pake* ‘use’ into a preposition ‘with’ in Taba; also see Eccles 1999). In Tariana, minor verbs within directional SVCs become postpositions (F in § 3.4 of Chapter 8).

V. Comparative and superlative markers Within SVCs, verbs meaning ‘pass’ or ‘exceed’ frequently become comparative and superlative markers (as in Cantonese: see § 5.2.4 of Chapter 2; and in Tetun Dili (see § 5.3 of Chapter 12); also see Heine and Kuteva 2002; Ansaldo 1999: 119–63; Bradshaw 1993; and Huttar and Koanting 1993).

VI. Conjunctions and complementizers Within complement clause SVCs (§ 3.2.4), verbs of saying often develop into complementizers (as in Cantonese, discussed in § 5.2.3 of Chapter 2, in Tetun Dili (§ 5.4 of Chapter 11), and numerous examples in Heine and Kuteva 2002); minor verbs may also develop into coordinating conjunctions, as is the case in Tetun Fehan (Van Klinken 2000), where *hodi* ‘bring, use’ has grammaticalized into a clause coordinator.

In non-isolating languages, developments in (I)–(III) may involve the creation of bound morphemes. Alternatively, the minor verb may shift its membership to become a member of a closed class of items with a grammatical function. Static
verbs in the minor slot in event-argument SVCs in Tariana shift into a smallish, semi-open class of adverbs (see F in §3.4 of Chapter 8). Similarly, in Mwotlap (§1.3 of Chapter 10) minor verbs in event-argument SVCs tend to become a type of adjunct. In Tamambo and Ambae, minor verbs in event-argument SVCs grammaticalize into aspect and mood markers (such as frustrative: Jauncey 1997: 389–90).

Grammaticalization of minor verbs into aspect, aktionsart, and modal markers in some languages is unambiguous: see the criteria outlined for Khwe in §3.3 of Chapter 4 and for Eastern Kayah Li in §2.3.2 of Chapter 6. Grammaticalization may be incomplete—scholars of Oceanic languages frequently mention ‘prepositional verbs’ (cf. Pawley 1973: 142–3)—that is, verb-like disyllabic forms ‘which connect a verb with its grammatical object’ and typically go back to SVCs. These grammaticalized forms preserve some verbal properties, and yet appear to be prepositional in their function (also see §8 in Chapter 12, for the same phenomenon in Toqabaqita).

Instrumental markers in Tetun Dili (§3.3 of Chapter 11) are equally ambiguous: they behave as prepositions if they appear after the major verb, but as verbs if they appear before it. In contrast, directional prepositions are fully grammaticalized and are synchronically distinct from historically related directional verbs (§3.2 of Chapter 11). Further examples of incomplete grammaticalization, from languages of Southeast Asia, are in Bisang (1992). In Tetun Dili (see §5 and Table 2 in Chapter 11) the grammaticalization of aspect markers, instrumentals, and causatives is an on-going process. This is in contrast to the comitative, modal, comparative, and superlative markers—as well as the complementizer—which are fully grammaticalized synchronically. The existence of such borderline cases does not invalidate the concept of grammaticalization (see Campbell 2001, for a critique of its overapplication). Rather, this is an argument in favour of a continuum approach to the process of grammaticalization (akin to Hopper’s 1987 ‘emergent grammar’).

There are other, less known, grammaticalization paths—for instance, in Imonda (Papuan area: Seiler 1986), minor verbs in asymmetrical SVCs have grammaticalized into verbal classifiers. In Olutec, two minor verbs, ‘spread’ and ‘be together’, are grammaticalized as verbal classifiers, while the verbs ‘finish’ and ‘exist’ gave rise to plural markers on the verb (§§4.25–6 of Chapter 13). In North American languages from northern California and Oregon, verb serialization of the ‘compounding’ type (see §4.2 below) has resulted in the creation of so-called lexical prefixes, with the meaning of manner, instrument and location/direction, which form parts of ‘bipartite stems’. This areally clustered grammaticalization pattern is analysed by Jacobsen (1980) and Delancey (1996, 1999).

A minor verb which participates in several SVCs can undergo polygrammatization (a situation whereby one morpheme is the source of more than one grammaticalization chain). In Thai (§4 of Chapter 7), kwa’, a motion verb
referring to passing and crossing, has grammaticalized as a temporal conjunction (VI) and as a comparative marker (V).

B. Unlike asymmetrical SVCs, symmetrical SVCs tend to lexicalise, often forming idiomatic combinations, for example:

- Igbo (Lord 1975: 41-2) kà-sà (say-spread.open) 'spread information, rumours', cè-fù (think-be.lost) 'forget', só-gbù-kà (follow-cut/kill-exceed) 'worry to death';
- Kalam yn ag (burn make.sound) 'ignite, start up engine', ag ñi (make.sound perceive) 'ask'; Yoruba (Sebba 1987: 199) pa run (hit crush) 'destroy', ri gbà (see take) 'receive';
- Tariana yawi di-ñha (be.jaguar 3sgnfeat-eat) 'enter into an aggressive shamanic trance', -sata -himà (greet hear) 'ask';
- Oro Nao (Chapacuran, Brazil) (Everett and Kern 1997) xiram pa’ (press.down kill) 'feel sorry for someone'.

Further examples are (29) in Chapter 4 from Khwe; (16) in Chapter 7 from Thai; (39) in Chapter 13 from Olutec; Table 4 in Chapter 9 from Dumo and ‘four-character idioms’ in §5.1 in Chapter 2 from Cantonese; also see Figure 2 in Chapter 5, for Ewe. Most examples involve sequential and cause–effect SVCs; however, the idiomaticity of the overall meaning often obscures the relationships between the components of such constructions.

We saw in §2.5 how SVCs represent stereotyped combinations of verbs (where there is ‘a cultural basis or pragmatic reason for their close association’: Bruce 1988). This creates the motivation for their development into idioms whose meanings are not equal to the sum of their components.

In summary: we can posit two opposite tendencies for the two types of SVCs. The minor verbs in asymmetrical verbs tend to become grammatical morphemes, losing their verbal status. This process is pervasive in some languages, exemplified in this volume by Ewe and, to a large extent, Toqabaqita (also see Aikhenvald forthcoming, on Manambu). As a result of this ‘grammaticalizing’ tendency, there may be no asymmetrical SVCs synchronically. We will see in §6 that, historically speaking, languages develop asymmetrical SVCs prior to symmetrical. But this does not mean that languages keep both intact.

On the other hand, symmetrical SVCs tend to become idiomatic in meaning. Some then become lexicalized to the extent of losing their segmentability—see examples in Table 5 in Chapter 9 from Dumo. As a result of such extensive lexicalization, the language loses its symmetrical SVCs, as does Tetun Dili (§§3 and 6 of Chapter 11). The interaction of this ‘lexicalizing’ tendency, on the one hand, and the ‘grammaticalizing’ tendency on the other, may lead to complete loss of SVCs, called ‘deserialization’ by Hajek (§6 of Chapter 11). In Tetun Dili,
this process is speeded up by the influx of loans and syntactic interference from Portuguese (see §8 below).

### 3.4.2. Iconicity of component order, and further properties

The order of components in asymmetrical SVCs is not necessarily iconic. A verb from a closed class may precede or follow one from an open class, depending on the construction type (contrary to the assertion, by Foley and Olson 1985: 40, that, in SVCs, ‘all open slots precede all restricted slots in linear order’). Tables 4 and 5 in Chapter 8 illustrate the ordering possibilities within asymmetrical SVCs in Tariana. Along similar lines, in Anamuxra, the order of components within an SVC depend on the construction type (Ingram 2001).

In symmetrical SVCs, constituent order tends to be iconic for sequential and cause–effect constructions, while in manner SVCs and in synonymous serialization the order of components is language-specific.

Asymmetrical and symmetrical SVCs can have other, language-specific, differences. Table 2 in Chapter 3 summarizes the formal differences between various construction types in Goemai: only symmetrical coordinate SVCs allow for a separate locational setting for one of the components, and negation has scope over V. In Tariana, symmetrical, asymmetrical, and event-argument SVCs differ in transitivity value and transitivity matching, in restrictions on verbs and in the scope of manner of action enclitics (Table 8 in Chapter 8).

SVCs of different types may diverge in their internal structure, that is whether they allow nesting or not. In Tariana, symmetrical, asymmetrical, and event-argument SVCs differ in their internal structure in terms of which SVCs they may contain (Table 7 in Chapter 8). Only deitic and coordinate SVCs in Goemai (§3.3 in Chapter 3) can contain other SVCs as their components. In Toqabaqita only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Properties of serial constructions</th>
<th>Asymmetrical</th>
<th>Symmetrical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Semantics</td>
<td>aspectual, directional, modal, associative, causative</td>
<td>sequence of events, cause–effect, manner SVCs with synonymous verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Iconic constituent order</td>
<td>NO: depends on construction type</td>
<td>YES: for sequential and cause–effect SVC NO: for manner and synonymous SVC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Grammaticalization or lexicalization</td>
<td>grammaticalization</td>
<td>lexicalization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
asymmetrical SVCs can contain an SVC as one of its components (§4, Chapter 12). In Tetun Dili, only one type of asymmetrical SVCs (motion-direction) can consist of SVCs as an individual component, that is, have an internally complex structure (§2.3 in Chapter 11). (Also see §3 and Figure 3 in Chapter 6, for an overview of combinations of SVCs in Eastern Kayah Li.)

There can be further syntactic differences between symmetrical and asymmetrical structures. In Khwe, symmetrical SVCs may be contiguous or not, depending on whether the components share objects, while asymmetrical SVCs are always contiguous (see §3.2 of Chapter 4). This is in fact a consequence of a more general property of asymmetrical SVCs in Khwe: their components cannot have separate objects. In Toqabaqita, only an asymmetrical (‘manner’) SVC can modify a noun, and the two types differ in terms of transitivity of the components (§5, §3.2 and §7 of Chapter 12). In Cantonese (§4.2 of Chapter 2) the order of components in a symmetrical SVC can be reversed without change of meaning, and the experiential aspect marker gwo⁶ may attach to either verb. In contrast, the head (that is, the major verb) in an asymmetrical SVC hosts the aspect marker. And see §6 in Chapter 9, on differences in verb combinations within symmetrical and asymmetrical SVCs in Dumo.

3.4.3. Summary

The established correlations between composition, meanings, iconicity, and grammaticalization and lexicalization in serial verb constructions are summarized in Table 2.

A binary division of SVCs into asymmetrical and symmetrical is justified by the clusters of properties summarized in Table 2, in addition to language specific distinctions discussed in §3.4.2. However, the difference between the two types may not be clear cut, and the correlations outlined in Table 2 do not always hold. One problem lies in the nature of ‘closed’ versus ‘open’ classes of verbs. For instance, the treatment of event-argument structures as symmetrical or asymmetrical largely depends on whether, in a particular language, the component verbs do or do not form a closed class. We have seen that manner SVCs in Toqabaqita are asymmetrical (since they contain stative verbs, from a closed class). In other languages, they are symmetrical. Cause–effect SVCs with resultative semantics in Eastern Kayah Li (Chapter 6) are of several types—symmetrical (§2.1.1), asymmetrical with restricted V₁ (§2.1.2) and asymmetrical with restricted V₂ (§2.1.5). Tetun Dili has no symmetrical SVCs.

In the case of highly idiomatic symmetrical SVCs, one can hardly make a definite statement about whether each component comes from a closed class, or from an open class. In addition, there can be restrictions on the major verb in asymmetrical SVCs. This is shown in Table 6 in Chapter 8 on Tariana. However, in the majority of cases major verbs belong to large lexical classes which cannot be listed exhaustively; there are just two exceptions, recent calques from a neighbouring language, Tucano. Similar examples come from Hmong (Jarkey 1991).
These problems suggest that asymmetrical and symmetrical SVCs are better viewed as extremes on a continuum. Their prototypical properties appear in Table 2; while individual languages are likely to present deviations from these.

Importantly, the distinction between symmetrical and asymmetrical constructions apply to multiverb structures other than SVCs. The symmetrical and asymmetrical converb constructions in Wolaitta (§§3.1 and 3.2 of Chapter 15) share most semantic and functional properties outlined in Table 2. This suggests that the existence of the two types reflects a general principle behind the organization of the continuum of multiverb structures, SVCs among them.

4. Formal properties of serial verb constructions

Formal properties of serial verb constructions include: contiguity versus non-contiguity of components of a construction (§4.1); and wordhood of components: whether the components of an SVC form independent grammatical words or not (§4.2). In §4.3, I consider the correlations between these two parameters. Marking of grammatical categories in SVCs is considered in §4.4. Some generalizations are offered in §4.5.

4.1. Contiguity of Components

Contiguous SVCs do not allow any other constituents to go in between their components. Examples of contiguous serialization are in (2) and (4–6) above, and also in (13) and (18) in Chapter 4 from Khwe, and many in Chapter 8, from Tariana. In contrast, non-contiguous SVCs allow other constituents to occur between the components, as in (1) and (3) above, and in Cantonese, Goemai and Ewe (Chapters 2, 3, and 5). A component of an SVC can be complex: it can consist of a verb followed by an incorporated noun, as in (8) in Chapter 10 from Mwotlap (also see discussion in §2.1 there), and in (28) in Chapter 12 from Toqabaqita.

In Dumo (Table 1, Chapter 9) asymmetrical SVCs of varied semantics are shown to differ in their contiguity. Similarly, in Tetun Dili, contiguity of components depends on the semantics of SVCs (§3.4 of Chapter 11), as it also does in Eastern Kayah Li (§1.1 of Chapter 6).

4.2. Wordhood of Components

By the wordhood criterion, SVCs divide into one-word and multi-word constructions. SVCs may consist of independent grammatical words (that is, each component could function as a well-formed predicate on its own), as in (1), (3), and (6) above, and also in Ewe (§2 in Chapter 5), Thai (Chapter 7), Mwotlap (see §2.2 in Chapter 10), and Tetun Dili (§4.3 in Chapter 11). Alternatively, the components may together form one grammatical word: this is also known as ‘compounding’ or ‘root serialization’ (Durie 1995, 1997; Foley 1991: 328–9 and Foley and Olson 1985). Examples (4), (24), and (26), from Alamblak (Bruce 1988), illustrate this. Single-word SVCs are a property of Olutec...
Most SVCs in Cantonese (§6 of Chapter 2) consist of separate words; however, cause–effect SVCs form one-word. Eastern Kayah Li (§1 in Chapter 6), Tariana (Chapter 8), and Lakota (Chapter 14) have both one-word and multi-word SVCs.

The wordhood of SVCs is, in fact, somewhat more complex. Cross-linguistically, a grammatical word and a phonological word do not always coincide (see Dixon and Aikhenvald 2002). An SVC can constitute one grammatical word and several phonological words. In Kana an SVC consists of ‘a succession of two independent verbs’ (Ikoro 1995: 250), each of which appears to constitute a phonological word. If an SVC is nominalized or takes any marker of a valency increasing derivation, it takes just one marker, and thus behaves as one grammatical word in this respect. In Goemai (§2 of Chapter 3) each component is a distinct grammatical and phonological word for all processes except nominalization: since they take just one marker per construction, they behave as one word. Tariana ((v) in §2 of Chapter 8) has a similar phenomenon of ‘affix sharing’ by all the components in a multi-word SVC.

Alternatively, an SVC can consist of one phonological word which is made up of several grammatical words, as do contiguous SVCs in Dumo (§5 of Chapter 9); non-contiguous SVCs consist of several grammatical and phonological words. Similarly, in Nganjilyemerri, an Australian language with limited serialization, SVCs form one phonological word which is made up of two grammatical words (Reid 1990: 178–80).

Wordhood may correlate with a type of SVC. In Anamuxra, an asymmetrical SVC with conative meaning (‘trying’) forms one phonological word which is one grammatical word. In contrast, a habitual SVC forms one phonological word and two grammatical words (Ingram 2001). Further investigation of correlations between different kinds of ‘word’ and different SVC types is required.

The situation may be even more complex. An SVC in Toqabaqita is basically one grammatical and one phonological word, but the component verbs retain something of their status as an independent word (§5 of Chapter 12). For example, (36) from Chapter 12 shows that instead of repeating the whole SVC, a speaker may choose to repeat just one verb. In Khwe (Table 4 in Chapter 4) the wordhood of an SVC depends on the contiguity of the components; in addition, some speakers treat manner SVCs as one grammatical word, and other SVCs as several grammatical words.

4.3. CONTIGUITY AND WORDHOOD: THE INTERACTION OF PARAMETERS

Providing a general typological framework which encompasses multi-word and one-word SVCs helps breach the artificial (and unhelpful) terminological gap between what is traditionally known as ‘compounding’ (as in Igbo) and as ‘serialization’ (as in Ewe). We will now look at how contiguity and wordhood interrelate as parameters for categorizing SVCs.
The two parameters for classifying SVCs discussed so far are relatively independent. Their combination yields four preliminary types (cf. also Durie 1997: 302–3). Types (I)–(III) are well represented:

(I) non-contiguous, multi-word, e.g. Baule (1), Ewe, Thai;
(II) contiguous, multi-word, e.g. Kristang, Tariana;
(III) contiguous, one-word, e.g. Igbo (2), Dàw (5), Alamblak (24, 26).

The fourth possibility has not so far been attested.¹⁶

(IV) non-contiguous, one-word.

Further distinctions can be made in cases where grammatical and phonological words do not coincide (like those mentioned in §4.2). More studies are needed on this.

Some scholars (especially those whose speciality is serializing languages with strong isolating tendencies, such as Mufwene 1990), suggest that serial constructions must consist of several grammatical words. The functional and formal overlap between ‘one-word serialization’ and ‘multi-word serialization’ puts in doubt such a drastic statement. These types may coexist in one language; then they are likely to have different semantics and functions (see discussion in §7). They may also represent different historical stages in the development of a language (as was suggested for Igbo by Lord 1977; also see Durie 1997: 301–7, and Foley and Olson 1985).

SVCs of types (I)–(III) pose distinct analytical problems. Multi-word SVCs have to be distinguished from coordination, consecutivization, subordinate clauses, and complex predicates (see §2.2). One-word SVCs may be confused with grammaticalized sequences of a root and an affix (which, in turn, may be a grammaticalized root). Such ambiguity allows discrepancies in the analysis of individual languages. For instance, what Crowley (1998: 131–7) considers verbal derivational prefixes in Erromangan (or Sye, Sie: Oceanic), Lynch and Capell (1983: 35) label ‘SVCs’. In addition, multi-word and one-word SVCs, on the whole, tend to correlate with different typological characteristics of languages—see §8.

4.4. expression and marking of grammatical categories
Grammatical categories typically expressed within a predicate include person of the subject and object(s); tense, aspect, modality, mood, evidentiality; negation; valency changing; word class changing derivations; illocutionary force; and discourse categories such as focus.

Within an SVC, each of these categories can be marked on every component. We call this concordant marking. Such marking may be the same on each component, or it can be only partially so (this is called ‘truncated’ marking). Or a

¹⁶ A possible example from Sakao (Austronesian: Guy 1974: 49) discussed by Durie (1997: 303) is inconclusive, since no in-depth study of serial verb constructions in Sakao is as yet available.
category may be marked once per construction—we call this single marking. SVCs which form one grammatical word allow single marking only. In multi-word SVCs with single marking, the single marker may go onto the first component, or onto a non-first component. The third possibility, found with multi-word SVCs only, is optional concordant marking.

4.4.1. Person marking in serial verb constructions

Same-subject serial verb constructions mark subjects in the following ways.\(^{17}\)

(A) Concordant marking of the same subject. This is the case in (6) from Tariana, in (15–16) from Dumo in Chapter 9, and in Bislama (Crowley 1990: 78).

(B) Concordant marking of different underlying subjects. In just a few languages, the components of an SVC may have different underlying subjects which acquire the same surface marking. An oft-quoted example comes from Akan (Kwa family). The two components of the SVC, take and flow, have different underlying subjects (I and corn respectively), but they receive the same surface subject marker. The SVC is discontinuous. Similar examples from Òbölò are in Durie (1995).

Akan (Schachter 1974: 258)

\[
\text{mede} \quad \text{aburow} \quad \text{migu} \quad \text{msum} \\
1sg.\text{take} \quad \text{corn} \quad 1sg.\text{flow} \quad \text{water.in}
\]

'I pour corn into water (lit. [I pour (corn)]-[I flow (in water)])'

Along similar lines, the components of serial causative constructions in Tariana receive the same subject marking; unlike Akan, SVCs in Tariana are always contiguous. In (13) of Chapter 8, the underlying subjects of the two verbs in the SVC are different: the subject of ‘order’ is ‘she’ (the mother), and the subject of ‘eat’ is ‘children’. The subject of the verb of ordering (third person singular feminine) is marked on both components (also see examples (13) and (22) of Chapter 8 for causatives, and the discussion of benefactive SVCs under C in §3.1 of Chapter 8, where similar principles are at work). Example (53) illustrates the same principle in secondary verb serialization in Tariana: the subject of ‘prevent’ is ‘child’, and the subject of work is ‘I’; the whole SVC takes third person singular cross-referencing.

Tariana (my field materials)

\[
\text{emite-tiki} \quad \text{nu-na} \quad \text{dihpani} \quad \text{di-adeta-naka} \\
\text{child-DIM} \quad 1sg.\text{OBJ} \quad \text{sgnf+work} \quad \text{sgnf-prevent-PRES.VIS}
\]

'The little boy is preventing me from working’

\(^{17}\) It appears to be the case that if different categories of the subject—e.g., person, gender, and number—are marked separately, they still behave in the same way, as in Ndjèbbana—see McKay (2000: 273, 286). In other circumstances, we will subsume the marking of gender and number under a broad category of ‘person’.
(C) TRUNCATED SAME SUBJECT MARKING. In Dravidian languages, the components of an SVC receive essentially the same marking for subject. But one of the components is marked with a shortened set of person indicators. In (54), from Konḍa (South Central Dravidian), -a ‘first plural exclusive’ marker on the first verb is a truncated variant of -ap ‘first plural exclusive’ which appears on the second verb. These shortened markers are found only in SVCs. (Cf. Meyerhoff 2001: 256–8, on Bislama.)

Konḍa (Steever 1988: 71–3)

(54) vā-n-a sū-n-ap
    come-nonpast-ipl.exc see-nonpast-ipl.exc
    ‘We will come and see’

(D) OPTIONAL CONCORDANT SUBJECT MARKING. In Taba, the person of the subject may be marked on both components, or just on the first one, with no semantic difference (Bowden 2001: 300–3). A similar situation has been reported for Baule (N’Guessan 2000: 78).

Taba (Bowden 2001: 295, 300)

(55) n=han n=ait te-su
    3sg=go 3sg=ascend neg-pot
    ‘(S)he hasn’t yet gone up’

(56) n=han ait te-su
    3sg=go ascend neg-pot
    ‘(S)he hasn’t yet gone up’

The choice between optional concordant and single marking may depend on the person: in Goemai (vii under §2 in Chapter 3) single marking is obligatory for set 1 pronouns (that is, 1sg, 3sg, 3pl and logophoric A). Optional concordant marking is used for other person–number combinations. First and second person in Mupun, also Chadic, allow both concordant and single marking in an SVC, without any change in meaning (Frajzyngier 1993: 229–31), while third person subjects are marked just once per construction. Only in Lakota (Table 2 in Chapter 14) does the choice of concordant or single marking correlate with the semantics of the construction, albeit in a fairly idiosyncratic way. We need further studies of optional concordant marking and its pragmatic and/or other motivations.

(E) THE SINGLE MARKER OF SUBJECT in one-word SVCs can be suffixed to the construction, as (4), (18), (24), and (26), from Alamblak and in Olutec (Chapter 13). Or it can be prefixed, as in Lakota and Yimas. In multi-word SVCs, a subject marker can be preposed to the whole construction, as in Tetun Dili (Chapter 11) and in Mwotlap (Chapter 10), and in (47), from Kristang. Or it can be prefixed to the first verb, as in (1) above from Baule, (27) in Chapter 5 from Ewe, and in (57).
Paamese (Crowley 1987: 62)

(57) samsene mungali vaasi velaase-nV laiane
Sampson 3sg+REALIS+rip open split jaw-CONSTRUCT.STATE lion
‘Sampson split apart the lion’s jaw’

A person marker can be postposed, or it can be suffixed to the last component of an SVC, as in Siane.

Siane (Papuan area: James 1983: 33)

(58) H1HLH koli H1_mino-an-e
hear/know remain-2sg-INDIC
‘You understand, are listening’

In the isolating languages of Southeast Asia and in many serializing West African languages with a strong isolating tendency, the subject (expressed with a full NP or with a personal pronoun) is usually marked just once (see Li and Thompson 1981: 595, on Mandarin Chinese). If subjects are not shared within an SVC, every component within a non-one-word SVC usually marks its own subject separately, as in (3), from Taba.

Marking of objects in SVCs differs from that of subjects: there is no concordant object marking. In one-word SVCs, the object is marked just once per construction. This is the case in Alamblak (4, 18, 24, and 26), and Yimas (31). In multi-word SVCs, a shared object is always marked just once, no matter whether subject marking is concordant or single.

4.4.2. Marking further verbal categories in serial verb constructions

Marking of tense, aspect, mood, modality, and evidentiality can be concordant or single. No truncated marking has been found. Concordant marking of tense, aspect, mood, and modality (also called ‘tense-copying’) is shown in (54) from Konđa, in (15) and (17) from Lango, and in (1), from Baule. Similar examples are in Ndżébbana (Australian: McKay 2000: 286–7) and in Akan (Schachter 1974).

Optional concordant marking of tense and aspect appears to occur in Saramaccan. Here, the past tense marker bi can appear once in the construction, before any component. Or it may occur before every verb within an SVC. This variability appears to be the property of most, if not all, SVCs in the language.

Saramaccan (Byrne 1990: 152)

(59) a (bi) féni dí wósu (bi) kabá
he tense paint the house tense finish
‘He had painted the house already’

Single marking of tense, aspect, mood, modality, and evidentiality is widespread. The marker can appear just on the first component, as in Paamese (57).
Or it may go onto the last component, as in Siane (58) and in Khwe (Chapter 4), or be placed after the last component of the construction, as in Dumo (§2 of Chapter 9) and in Taba (55–56) above. In these cases, this placement is independent of whether the first component is major or minor. In contrast, in Cantonese, as shown in §4.2 of Chapter 2, the aspect marker is placed after the major verb in an asymmetrical SVC (that is, its 'head').

Only in Goemai does the choice between concordant and single marking of the obligative depend on serial construction type; only deictic SVCs require single marking (see examples (6a–b) in Chapter 3, and Table 2 there). In Cantonese (examples (37–38) in §4.2 of Chapter 2), optional concordant aspect marking is in free variation with single marking just for some speakers.

Concordant marking of negation was shown in (19) from Anyi-Sanvi. In many other languages negation receives single marking per SVC (even if other categories receive concordant marking), as in (17) from Lango, and (18) from Alamblak. Negation may be marked once per SVC, while person may be marked on each component, as in Goemai (under (vi) and (vii) of §2 in Chapter 3), Tariana (§2 of Chapter 8), and Dumo (§2 of Chapter 9).

Word class changing derivations (e.g. nominalizations) and subordinating morphemes rarely require concordant marking: one such example comes from Lango in (9). Examples of single marking of nominalizers and relativizers include (8) from Tariana; similar examples are in Goemai (§2 of Chapter 3), Khwe (§3 of Chapter 4), and Ewe (§5.4 of Chapter 5). In Kana (Ikoro 1995: 250), the enclitic relative clause marker occurs at the end of the clause containing an SVC.

No examples have been found for concordant marking of valency changing, focus, or illocutionary force. In Siane (James 1983: 51), the 'focal given' clitic goes onto the first component of an SVC, while all other markers go onto the last component.

Within one language, one category may show concordant marking, and another single marking. In Kana, the marker of the itive aspect (with the meaning 'going to a place') appears on the first verb (Ikoro 1995: 251–2) and so do the repetitive and modal suffixes and tenses; while the markers of intensive and inchoative derivations can occur on either verb. Of all the modalities in Goemai, the choice between concordant and single marking is available only for the obligative (see (iv) in §2 of Chapter 3).

4.4.3. Grammatical processes which have scope over one component of an SVC. By definition, all verbs within an SVC have the same value for tense–aspect and mood (see §2.4). In Ewe (§5 of Chapter 5), each component of an SVC can be marked for different categories, provided they are semantically compatible, in agreement with monoclausality of SVCs. The process of reduplication marking repetition of action can have scope over one component of an SVC. In Mwotlap, root reduplication marks pluractionality—examples (11a) and (11b) in Chapter 10 show that, if reduplicated, either the first component or the second component of
a symmetrical SVC can refer to a subaction performed more than once. A similar example from Thai is at (5) in Chapter 7, and one from Toqabaqita at (37) from Chapter (12). (This is far from universal: in Dumo reduplication is the only way of marking irrealis, and it always has the whole SVC within its scope—see §2 of Chapter 9.)

The scope of some categories can depend on the construction type. In Tariana (see under G in §3.4 of Chapter 8), the scope of manner of action enclitics depends on the construction type. In asymmetrical and event-argument SVCs, an enclitic characterizes the whole construction, while in symmetrical construction individual components are within its scope.

In Ewe and in West African languages such as Fon and Yoruba (§5.3 of Chapter 5) components of SVCs can be questioned and focused separately, in contrast to more tightly-knit structures in other languages discussed here. This does not go against their monoclausal status.

4.5. SOME GENERALIZATIONS
The following tendencies hold for the surface marking of verbal categories within a serial verb construction.

I. If a language with SVCs has concordant marking for at least one of tense, aspect, mood, or modality, it must also have concordant subject person marking. The concordant subject person marking may be optional (as in Taba and Baule), truncated or obligatory. The reverse is not true: we have seen many examples of languages with concordant marking of person and single marking of tense (e.g. Paamese, Tariana, Mupun, and Anamuxra).

II. ‘Truncated’, or shortened, marking is not found for categories other than person of the subject.

III. If a serializing language has concordant marking for at least one subordinating and/or word-class changing category, it is also likely to have concordant marking for person marking and for at least one of tense, aspect, evidentiality, mood, or modality categories. Examples include Lango and Tariana.

IV. Negation is likely to be marked once per SVC, even if other categories receive concordant marking.

If a language has several coexisting types of SVCs, they may differ as to whether they have concordant or single marking for the various categories discussed here. Single marking is associated with more cohesive, tightly-knit structures—these tend to also have obligatory argument sharing and to refer to single-scene events. Overall, they have more of the prototypical properties of SVCs (outlined in §2) than the alternative, looser-knit structures which display concordant marking (§7).
5. Productivity of serialization, and functions of serial verb constructions

5.1. Productive and limited serialization, and double verb constructions

Verb serialization may be productive or limited. Languages with productive serialization tend to have both symmetrical and asymmetrical constructions, with few if any ‘non-serializable’ verbs (see §6). Most languages of West Africa, Southeast Asia and Oceania, and some languages in Amazonia (for instance, Tariana and Makú) are of this kind. Verb serialization may be obligatory, or optional, as in Kana (Ikoro 1995: 315–16). The functions of serialization, including optional serialization, are outlined at the end of this section.

In languages with limited serialization, SVCs are restricted to just one type: usually asymmetrical. All Australian languages with serial verb constructions—Ndjebbana, Nakkara, Ngan.gityemerri, Kayardild—are of this kind; so too are some Oceanic languages, such as Araki (François 2002) and the languages of Southern Vanuatu (Crowley 1998: 268–9); Kham, from the Tibeto-Burman family; Bare, Warekena, and Baniwa (North Arawak); and Bagwalal (Northeast Caucasian: Kalinina 2001).

In languages with just asymmetrical SVCs, some major verbs from large open semantic classes, like ‘eat’ and ‘drink’, may not be serialized (as in Mupun: Frajzyngier 1993: 232). Which kinds of verbs are more and which are less likely to be serialized depends on the type of SVC—see §6. If a language has limited verb serialization of a certain type, one can make reasonable predictions as to which verbs are likely to occur in SVCs. SVCs in languages with limited serialization tend to consist of just two components. A component of an SVC can hardly ever be an SVC itself (this is in contrast to languages with productive serialization: see §3.3 and Table 7 in Chapter 8).

A few familiar European languages have a restricted set of contiguous sequences of verbs with a mono-predicative reading. At first sight, these appear to have some of the definitional properties of SVCs outlined in §2 above. Examples include go + eat in American English (see discussions in Zwicky 1990 and Pullum 1990), colloquial Brazilian Portuguese pegou falou (lit. ‘(he) took (he) spoke’) ‘he spoke all of a sudden’ (see Martins 1994), and further instances in Russian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Swedish, and in Turkic languages (called ‘double verbs’ by Csató 2001 and Weiss 1993). These constructions cannot be considered on a par with SVCs, for the following reasons:

(i) They are usually restricted in their mood, polarity, tense, and aspect choices: for instance, let’s go eat is grammatical in American English, but *we went ate or *we went eat are not. In contrast, productive SVCs are hardly ever restricted in this way.
(ii) They are limited to just a few verbs; often, but not always, a few verbs of motion and posture.

(iii) Unpredictable derivational restrictions may arise within each particular semantic group: for instance, in Russian, motion verbs containing the preverbs u- and ot(o)- cannot occur in double verb constructions, while verbs with other preverbs can.

(iv) Double verbs are often restricted to certain registers: for instance, in Brazilian Portuguese they are considered very colloquial. In productively serializing languages some subtypes of SVCs—but never all SVCs—can be tokens of a certain style (see the end of §3.4.3, on White Hmong).

(v) A conjunction or a dependency marker can be inserted between the components with no change in meaning, cf. American English go get your jumper and go and get your jumper.

In many languages double verb constructions can be treated simply as lexical idioms. Similarities between these and SVCs in serializing languages (both with productive and limited serialization) vary from language to language. Historically, double verb constructions may develop into full-fledged SVCs as a grammatical technique; they can then be considered instances of incipient serialization. Only analysis based on language internal criteria can decide the status of each particular construction. 18

Some Indo-European languages have a limited number of verb–verb compounds which can be exhaustively listed in a dictionary. Their semantics is idiosyncratic. In English, such compounds can indicate simultaneous actions, as in stir fry, crash land, kick start, and sleep walk, or actions in sequence, as in drink drive and strip search. These lexical compounds are not to be considered as SVCs.

5.2. WHAT ARE SVCs GOOD FOR?

Functional motivation for verb serialization lies in discourse organization and information packaging. Both symmetrical and asymmetrical verbs can be a powerful means for providing coherent information packaging, and elaborate breakdown of a complex event (see Pawley 1987 and Durie 1997: 325). Asymmetrical SVCs may express grammatical categories. SVCs may help highlight various aspects of an action, elaborating on its various facets (Matisoff 1969: 71). Speakers of Tariana, with its productive serialization, complain that when a long, elaborate

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18 In many languages with productive serialization, resultative or cause–effect constructions (some of which have recently been labelled ‘depictives’: this is however neither a uniform grammatical technique nor a semantic type), of the kind ‘I shot the deer (he) died’, are bona fide serial verb constructions (see discussion above, in §5.2; and the discussion of resultative multverb constructions in Lao, by Enfield forthcoming). However, their translational equivalent in, say, English I shot the deer dead can hardly be considered a serial verb construction (contrary to, for instance, Rosen 1997): since such structures do not consist of a sequence of verbs of equal status: the second verb is an adjectival concept.
SVC in their language gets translated into Portuguese, it comes out as a ‘shortcut’, leaving out a wealth of detail. Serialization of synonymous SVCs is a token of high-flown style in White Hmong (Riddle 1990), characterized by highly elaborate expression.

Choosing an SVC over a monoverbal predicate can have further pragmatic motivation. In Kana a one-verb predicate is used if the speaker intends to emphasize the fact that a stolen or missing book has been returned (60).

Kana (Ikoro 1995: 316)

(60) bärılê è-nûâ lô kpá
Barile PF.PRE-bring:INST spec:sg book
‘Barile has brought the book’

If the entire action of bringing the book back is emphasized, an SVC is preferred:

Kana

(61) bärılê è-sû-à lô kpá nûâ
Barile PF.PRE-take-per spec:sg book bring:INST
‘Barile has brought the book’

This is reminiscent of the discourse-marking SVCs in Khwe (see §3.2.6 of Chapter 4), whereby an SVC marks a new event.

In some West African languages definite objects can only occur in SVCs (see §3.2.5 above, on Anyi-Sanvi). In Akan (Osam 1997: 264–6), the object in a ditransitive clause can only be definite if the ditransitive verb is serialized (the indirect object can be either definite or indefinite). This provides an additional grammatical and functional motivation for using SVCs rather than simple verbs in these languages. Further functional motivation comes from the variety of grammatical roles performed by SVCs—such as, for instance, introducing oblique arguments, or providing supplementary techniques for valency changing (see §§3.2.5–6).

6. Which verbs are likely to occur in serial verb constructions?

Which verbs are most likely and which are least likely to occur in SVCs depends on the type of SVC. For asymmetrical SVCs, the basic verbs of motion, direction, posture, and location occur most frequently, from a cross-linguistic point of view, in the minor verb slot (cf. Foley and Olson 1985: 41, and Crowley 1987: 42). Basic motion verbs (‘come’, ‘go’, and ‘move’) are most frequently serialized (as in Yimas). Some languages may add further posture verbs: Ndjeßbana, a language with limited serialization, employs the verbs ‘go’, ‘move’, and also ‘sit’, ‘stand’, and ‘lie’ in the minor verb slot. In Ngan.gityemerri (Reid 1990), only verbs of motion and posture are used in asymmetrical SVCs. Other languages, such as, for instance, Kham (Tibeto-Burman: Watters 2002) or Bare (Arawak: Aikhenvald
1995), serialize verbs of becoming, desiderative (‘want’) and abilitative (‘can’), in addition to the two basic motion verbs. This does not agree with the hierarchy of serializability of verbs suggested by Foley and Olson (1985), which can be schematically represented as follows, from most serializable to least serializable verbs:

- Basic motion verbs (e.g. ‘come’, ‘go’)
  - Other active intransitive verbs (‘wander’, ‘crawl’, etc.) and posture verbs (‘sit’, ‘stand’, ‘lie’)
  - Stative or process verbs
  - Transitive verbs

Rather than establishing a hierarchy of semantic types of verbs by the likelihood of their occurrence in an SVC (as was done by Foley and Olson 1985: 41–4), I suggest a hierarchy of SVCs, by semantic type, and then make hypotheses as to which verbs are more and which are less likely to occur in each of these.

Asymmetrical SVCs are arranged below, in order from the most frequent and cross-linguistically widespread to the more restricted ones, with an indication (in the order of priority) of the semantic group of verbs likely to occur in such constructions. The order also reflects the historical development of SVCs.

1a. Direction and orientation: verbs of motion. Sye (Erromangan), an Oceanic language of Southern Vanuatu (Crowley 1998: 268–9) only has this type of serialization.

1b. Aspect, extent, and change of state: motion, posture, and stance verbs, ‘continue’, ‘complete’, or ‘finish’, ‘start’, and possibly others, e.g. ‘hold, grasp’ for a persisting activity, or ‘pile up’ for an activity that is ‘generously indulged in’ in Kayardild (Evans 1995: 312); or ‘take’ to mark the intensive in Bagwalal; or ‘throw’ for completive aspect in Indo-Aryan and Dravidian (Masica 1976: 146–7); or change of state, ‘go’ or ‘become’, as in Kham.

Every serializing language has 1a and 1b constructions; the Australian languages Ndèbbana, Nakkara, and Ngan.gityemerrir, and the Northeast Caucasian language Bagwalal have only these.

2. Modal: wanting, being able to, and other modal meanings, including purpose (non-modal verbs may develop modal meanings in SVCs, for example ‘receive’ and ‘touch’ as markers of obligation in (41), from Kristang). Modal serialization can be considered a subtype of secondary verb serialization whose productivity in cross-linguistic terms remains to be investigated.

A serializing language is likely to have modal SVCs if it has SVCs of types 1a and 1b types. Kham, Warekena, and Bare are examples of languages with SVCs of types 1 and 2.

3. Valency-increasing and argument-adding (case-marking) SVCs involve transitive verbs with fairly generic semantics, such as ‘give’ (for valency-increas-
ing causative and benefactive), ‘take’ (for instrumental and/or for general argument adding), and also ‘do, make’ and ‘put’ for causative (only Loniu seems to use ‘go’ for introducing an argument). Tetun Dili (Chapter 11) is an example of a language with serialization types 1–3. Additional distinctions may involve privative, as in Baule (serialization types 1–4) or Kristang (serialization types 1–5). Only languages which use SVCs for valency increasing have argument-adding serialization. The opposite is not true.

4. Comparative and superlative SVCs involve ‘go’, ‘pass’, and ‘exceed’, as in (9) and (15), from Lango. This kind of serialization may occur in languages which just have serialization of types 1 and 2; Lango appears to have just serialization of groups 1, 2, and 4.

Languages with limited serialization hardly ever go beyond construction types 1, 2 and, at most, 3. Languages with productive serialization (that is, with both symmetrical and asymmetrical SVCs) also have types 5 and 6.

5. Serialization as a complementation strategy; numerous examples can be found in the languages of Southeast Asia and Oceania.

6. Valency-decreasing serial verb constructions with a passive meaning employ verbs such as ‘touch’, ‘strike’ (Macuna also has ‘receive’). Only languages with serialization of types 1–4 have valency-decreasing serialization (they include Kristang, Thai, and Lao). Reciprocal SVCs employ the verbs ‘be together’ or ‘do to each other’; these are rare.

Languages with productive serialization are also likely to have additional types of SVCs, not covered by the above, for example, intensifying as in Dumo (Chapter 9) or marking a new event, as in Khwe (Chapter 4).

We have seen that asymmetrical SVCs tend to grammaticalize. SVCs of types 1a, 1b, 3, and 4 may lose their status as such: then, the corresponding minor verbs become directionals (as in Toqabaqita) or aspect markers (as in Ewe), or valency-increasing adpositions, or comparative markers (see §3.4.1).

Correlations between the presence of event-argument SVCs and SVCs of other types in a serializing language require further study. SVCs appear to be used this way in serializing languages which have already developed asymmetrical SVCs of types 1–3 (in some cases, such as Toqabaqita, these asymmetrical constructions have grammaticalized).

There are typically no preferences as to the semantic group of verbs which can occur in the major verb slot in symmetrical SVCs. Verbs which tend not to occur in SVCs of any sort, or to show restrictions, are copulas and existential verbs, and also stative verbs, as in Olutec (Chapter 13), Cantonese (Chapter 2), Tariana (Table 6 in Chapter 8), Gurr-goni, and Tamambo. If stative verbs occur in SVCs at all, they are likely to occur in the minor verb slot in event-argument SVCs (they
may then shift grammatical class and become adverbs; then they no longer qualify as SVCs—see §3.4.1).

7. Several kinds of serial verb constructions in one language: iconic motivation

Within a single language, there can be a ‘good case for distinguishing quite different kinds of serialisation’ (Durie 1997: 292) with different sets of properties. A language can combine contiguous and non-contiguous SVCs (which have all, or most, of the properties of SVCs discussed in §2). In numerous Oceanic languages, non-contiguous SVCs require concordant person and tense–mood marking, while contiguous verbs do not. These differ in their semantics, argument sharing, scope of adverbs, transitivity matching and preferences for verb types (see Crowley 1987, Jauncey 1997: 367–410, Bradshaw 1993, Early 1993, and Hyslop 2001).

A preliminary investigation of the kinds of coexisting SVCs in about 100 selected languages from South and Central America, Southeast Asia, New Guinea, and Oceania shows that in languages which have more than one kind of verb sequencing structure, then the closer verb roots are in surface structure, the more they tend to undergo grammaticalization or lexicalization of some sort. The following cross-linguistic tendencies have been attested for languages which have more than one kind of verb sequencing structure.

- **First tendency:** If a language has two verb sequencing constructions, at least one must be contiguous, that is either both are contiguous (as in Tariana: Chapter 8); or one is contiguous, and the other non-contiguous (as in Eastern Kayah Li: §4.2 of Chapter 6; in Dumo: see Table 1 in Chapter 9; and Tetun Dili: Table 1 in Chapter 11).
- **Second tendency:** The closer verb roots are in surface structure, the more they tend to undergo grammaticization or lexicalization of some sort.

In all the examples above, one-word verb sequences (also referred to as verb compounding) tend to undergo grammaticalization or lexicalization. They usually become more idiomatic than non-incorporating verb sequences. The degree of lexicalization differs; it may be conditioned by other factors, including areal diffusion patterns. Examples occur in Eastern Kayah Li (§4.2 of Chapter 6), Tariana (§§5–6 of Chapter 8), and Bislama (Crowley 1990: 68). This language has three kinds of SVCs. Productive non-contiguous SVCs are used to express a wide variety of meanings, including directional, as in (62).

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19 Within the framework of Role and Reference grammar, this distinction is something described as ‘core’ versus ‘nuclear’ serialization (see Chapters 6 and 13). It reflects the nature and the degree of syntactic juncture between the verbs which form a serial construction. The basic difference between the two is that ‘while core layer serialization allows some degree of independence to the two verbs in the choice of nominal arguments associated with each, this is not the case with nuclear serialization’ (Crowley 1987: 58).
Bislama (Crowley 1990: 71)

(62) maki i pulum rop i kam
Maki 3sg pull rope 3sg come
'Maki pulled the rope this way' (lit. pull-come)

Two further types of contiguous serial constructions differ in their semantics, productivity, and the ways in which they are grammaticalized. **Contiguous multi-word constructions** involve one of just four verbs: *stap* ‘stay’, expressing durative or habitual meaning, and *save* ‘know’, to express capability or permission (both used preverbally), *go* ‘go’ in its reduplicated form *gogo*, for durative and iterative, and *finis* ‘finish’, for completive (both used postverbally). They are less productive and more grammaticalized than constructions like the one in (62). **Contiguous one-word constructions** are even more limited: they occur with a very limited number of verbs of perception and with *save* ‘know’, for example *luk-save* (look-know) ‘recognize’ (by sight), *smelem-save* (smell-know) ‘recognize by smell’. This is an example of:

- **Third tendency**: One-word serial verb constructions tend to be restricted to a more limited set of verb roots. That is, if a language has one-word and multiword serial verb constructions, the former tend to be limited, and the latter productive. This tendency appears to hold for most cases, with the exception of Eastern Kayah Li (§4.2.1 of Chapter 6) where multi-word non-contiguous serial verb constructions are much less productive than one-word contiguous SVCs.

An ultimate explanation for the first two tendencies lies in the principle of iconic motivation. Haiman (1985: 147) showed that ‘the lexical independence of a word reflects the conceptual independence of the entity it represents’ (cf. Kirsner 1985: 253). The closer the verbs are in surface structure, the lesser conceptual distance between the subactions they denote (see examples and discussion in Haiman 1985: 122–8). ‘Lexicalization’ of verbal roots in a number of languages (Káte, Chickasaw (Muskogean family), Menya (Angan family, Papua New Guinea), Swahili, etc.) correlates with the ways in which a verb sequence denotes one, and not two, events. That is, the reduction of the form of the verb ‘signals its semantic fusion with another verb to the point where the two verbs tend to denote a single act’ (Haiman 1985: 123). A gradient degree of fusion can be observed, in a ‘continuum’ of verb sequencing structures within one language which goes from non-contiguous to contiguous to one-word sequences, in agreement with the second tendency.

Coexisting SVCs in one language also vary in terms of their composition and semantic types, and the expression of grammatical categories. How this correlates with iconicity principles requires further study.
8. Properties of serializing languages, and the diffusion of serial verb constructions

Serial verb constructions are a prominent feature of the languages of Southeast Asia (Bisang 1995), Oceania (Crowley 2002), New Guinea, and West Africa (see Dimmendaal 2001: 383, for discussion of the distribution of serial verb constructions among Niger-Congo languages). Serial verb constructions are found in most European-based creole languages—examples quoted above include Bislama, Kristang, and Saramaccan. Versteegh (1984) argued that the appearance of limited serialization in colloquial Arabic could be the result of creolization (there is no information on SVCs in Creoles of other origins). Serialization, albeit limited, is also attested in a few northern Australian languages, such as Kayardild (Evans 1995), Gurr-goni (Green 1995), Ndjébbana (McKay 2000), Nakkara (Eather 1990), Burarra (Green 1987), and Ngan.gityemerri (Reid 1990), and in a number of languages from Central America (see discussion of SVCs in Olutec, a Mixean language, by Zavala in Chapter 13), and South America.

In northern Amazonia, serializing languages from the North Arawak, Makú, Yanomami, and East-Tucanoan families are spoken in the same area. A few other Arawak languages have limited verb serialization (see § 7.3 of Aikhenvald 1999b). Other languages, such as Yagua (Peba-Yagua: Payne and Payne 1990: 413; Payne 1990: 225) and Pirahã (Everett 1986: 300–1) appear to have developed a number of verbal suffixes from erstwhile SVCs. Dravidian and Indo-Aryan languages in India have bi-componential SVCs with single marking of grammatical categories (called ‘explicator compounds’: Masica 1976: 144–8). Limited serialization has been attested in some Northeast Caucasian languages (Kalinina 2001), and possibly in a few languages of Central Asia (Masica 1976: 148–59). SVCs are infrequent in North American Indian languages of highly polysynthetic profile, Lakota being the only language of this area for which they have been documented (see §5 of Chapter 14).

Verb serialization as a grammatical mechanism tends to diffuse. For instance, see Suwilai (1987: 26), on how Khmu, a Mon-Khmer minority language in Thailand, has developed serial causative constructions similar to those in Thai; Aikhenvald (2000a) on the interaction of areally diffused and historically inherited patterns in Tariana verb serialization; Masica (1976: 144–8) on the spread of SVCs in Eurasia; Dimmendaal (2001) on the African situation; and Foley (1986: 113–20) on verb serialization as a widespread feature in non-Austronesian languages of Papua New Guinea. Languages with SVCs tend to form areal clusters. SVCs are an areal feature of the language of East Timor and the adjacent areas of Eastern Indonesia, and have diffused into the contact varieties of Malay (see §6 of Chapter 11).

A predicate as a series of verbs representing the subcomponents of an overall event-scheme correlates with a particular cognitive packaging of an event. Diffusion of such grammatical patterns goes together with diffusing a way of ‘saying
things’ and ‘thinking’ about things—see Ross (2001) and Haig (2001) for a discussion of the importance of shared cognitive structures and cognitive packaging in language convergence.

The opposite process—that of loss of SVCs, or ‘deserialization’—is under way in Tetun Dili, an Austronesian language in contact with Portuguese (see §6 of Chapter 11). Compared with its more conservative relative, Tetun Fehan, SVCs in Tetun Dili are restricted, both in their frequency and their types and functions. This deserialization follows a number of pathways, including an advanced stage of grammaticalization of asymmetrical SVCs, and replacement of SVCs by single verb loans from Portuguese. Syntactic calquing is also at work: for instance, a periphrastic causative construction has been developed in Tetun Dili under Portuguese influence, and is gradually replacing the erstwhile serial causative structure. With the increasing importance of Portuguese as an official language, one can predict the gradual disappearance of verb serialization from Tetun Dili. That is, both gain and loss of SVCs can be contact-induced.

What kind of typological profile is associated with verb serialization? We have seen that SVCs have different formal properties in terms of contiguity and the wordhood of their components. These properties tend to correlate with different linguistic types.

Isolating languages tend to have SVCs whose components are independent phonological and grammatical words; they often have discontinuous (that is, non-contiguous) SVCs. These languages may also have ‘phonemic tone and many monosyllabic words’, as well as verb-medial constituent order (Foley and Olson 1985: 50–1). Verb serialization is often associated with just this type: SVCs make up for the lack of bound morphology in the language by expressing numerous grammatical categories discussed in §3.2. Isolating tendencies are indeed characteristic of Goemai, a West Chadic language (Chapter 3). This is in contrast to Chadic languages from other branches with highly synthetic verb structure, such as Hausa, which have no SVCs. However, neither Goemai nor Dumo (Chapter 9) or any of the Oceanic languages discussed here (Chapters 10–12) are fully isolating.

Contiguous and especially one-word SVCs tend to be found in synthetic and polysynthetic languages, such as Yimas, Alamblak, Tariana (Chapter 8), Olutec (Chapter 13), Lakota (Chapter 14), or the Makú languages. Other examples of highly synthetic (even polysynthetic) and morphologically very rich languages with verb serialization include Gurr-goni, Kayardild, Ndëbbana, and Ngan. gityemerri in Australia, and numerous languages of northern Amazonia. However, as de Reuse shows at the end of Chapter 14, ‘very heavily polysynthetic languages’ (like Athabascan, Eskimo-Aleut, or Wakashan) typically have no SVCs: all the grammatical meanings are expressed through a rich array of affixes on the verb.

This brings us to another typological property of languages with SVCs. The majority of such languages are either head-marking—as Goemai, Khwe, Dumo, Lakota, and Mwotlap) or neither head-nor dependent-marking—as are
Cantonese, Eastern Kayah Li, Thai, Lao, Vietnamese, and many creoles. But some languages with dependent marking do have verb serialization—examples are Kayardild and Gurr-goni, from Australia; Bagwalal, a Northeast Caucasian language; a number of Oceanic languages (such as Ambae); Dâw (Makú) and Tariana (Arawak), from northwest Amazonia. The last exception can be accounted for by a combination of genetically inherited and areally diffused properties: dependent-marking properties are being acquired through language contact, while head-marking properties are inherited from the protolanguage (Aikhenvald 2002).

In some productively serializing languages, verbs form a largish but closed class—this is the case in Kalam and Kobon, both Papuan. Kalam has under 125 verbs, of which only about twenty-five are commonly used (Pawley 1993; Pawley and Lane 1998). Dumo (under b) in §1 of Chapter 9 also has a closed set of basic verb roots, with around 100 members. There are a number of verbs with very general semantics, and these ‘generic’ verbs are combined together with more specific verbs to provide a precise description of an event. The wealth of SVCs in these three languages ‘compensates’ for having a smallish closed verb class and verbs with highly generic semantics.

It has also been frequently mentioned in the literature that serializing languages tend to be either verb-final, or verb-medial (Givón 1975; cf. Foley and Olson 1985: 47; Lord 1993; Durie 1995, 1997). There are, however, a few verb-initial serializing languages, e.g. Ravúa (Mon-Khmer) (Seuren 1990; Durie 1995). Serializing languages of the area of the Upper Rio Negro—Baniwa, Warekena, Bare (Arawak) and Dâw (Makú)—allow both verb-initial and verb-medial constituent orders; and so does Khwe (Chapter 4). Constituent order as a parameter for typological characterization of languages has limited applicability (see Mithun 1987), and in many languages the order is discourse dependent (as it is in Tariana). There is no simple correspondence between constituent order and verb serialization. Other word-order-related characteristics may be of relevance: for instance, whether a language is predominantly right-branching or left-branching must affect the order of components in asymmetrical SVCs (we can recall that their order is not governed by the principles of iconicity).

Varying functions and semantic types of SVCs may correlate with other properties of a language. Languages with hardly any dependent marking may develop markers of grammatical relation out of SVCs, as is the case for West African languages as well as for Oceanic languages (albeit to a lesser extent). In serializing languages with pre-existing dependent marking, SVCs are not used for marking arguments (this is the case in Tariana and Dâw). Similarly, languages with productive morphological causatives (such as Warekena) do not have causative SVCs. In contrast, those with restricted morphological causatives (Tariana, Ambae, Tamambo), or no morphological causatives at all (Manambu), tend to have causative SVCs; some employ cause–effect SVCs in this function. Some African serializing languages do not have three-place predicates; SVCs
appear to ‘fill’ this gap. However, this correlation is not universal (as demonstrated by Ameka 2002, and in Chapter 5 here).

All SVCs operate on a nominative–accusative principle (that is, either same subject, or switch-function whereby the O of one is coreferential with the A or S of the other), and never on an ergative–absolutive principle. That is, serializing languages are at least partly syntactically accusative. The existence of SVCs may go together with the presence of other structures operating on a nominative–accusative basis, such as switch-reference (as in Yuman, and many Papuan languages).

A number of putative correlations between verb serialization and other properties have been proved incorrect. Non-distinctness of prepositions and verbs has been considered as a typological property of serializing languages (see Byrne 1987 and Veenstra 1996: 106). In actual fact, languages with SVCs of various types have adpositions (prepositions or postpositions) as a separate class, as is the case in Ewe, Olutec, Tariana, Dumo, and many other languages (also see discussion in §1.1 of Chapter 2, on Cantonese and Mandarin, and Appendix to this chapter).

9. Summary, and prospects for further study

Serial verb constructions are a grammatical technique whereby two or more verbs form one predicate. A sequence of verbs qualifies as an SVC if there is no marker of syntactic dependency between the components (and, in addition, for languages which distinguish between finite and nonfinite verbs, neither component can take a separate nonfinite marking; the whole construction has to be nonfinite, as in example (9), from Lango). SVCs are distinct from idiomatic double verb sequences which have restrictions on their mood, tense and aspect choices (as in European languages). SVCs form one prosodic unit (see §2.3).

An SVC describes what is conceptualized as one integrated situation, or one event. Semantically, such an event may be composed of a series of sub-events. ‘Single-scene’ SVCs correlate with cohesive, tightly-knit structures with shared participants; they tend to be more fused in their surface realization than ‘multi-scene’ SVCs. These correlate with less cohesive, less tightly bound constructions, and may even be reminiscent of clause sequences. The differences can be accounted for by the principle of iconicity in grammar.

All serializing languages have same-subject SVCs. Prototypical SVCs share all arguments. Lack of argument sharing is associated with less cohesive and less tightly-knit structures. Event-argument SVCs are a type of SVC with no shared arguments. The event or state denoted by one component is predicated on the entire situation referred to by an SVC.

By their composition, SVCs fall into two broad groups. Asymmetrical verbs consist of a ‘minor’ verb from a closed class, and a ‘major’ verb (the head of an SVC) from an open class which determines the transitivity of the whole construction. The minor verbs tend to grammaticalize into markers of direction,
aspect, and valency changing (see §3.4). Symmetrical SVCs consist of components chosen from major lexical classes. They do not have a head, and tend to give rise to lexical idioms. Languages with a grammaticalizing tendency may, synchronically, have no asymmetrical SVCs (as is the case in Ewe). Languages with a lexicalizing tendency may have no symmetrical SVCs (as is the case in Tetun Dili). Productively serializing languages tend to have SVCs of both kinds, while languages with limited serialization have just asymmetrical SVCs. The distinction between asymmetrical and symmetrical SVCs may be viewed as a continuum, depending on the semantic and functional overlap between subtypes of both, and on the composition of closed and open classes of verbs.

Serial verb constructions can be contiguous or non-contiguous. They may form one grammatical and/or phonological word, or be multi-word. In multi-word SVCs, various grammatical categories can either receive concordant marking (on every component) or be marked just once. The person of the subject is more likely to receive concordant marking than any other category. SVCs of all types and structures show the same functional and semantic properties and tendencies. The present framework—inclusive in character—allows us to apply the proposed parameters to SVCs in a wide variety of languages (overcoming some terminological traditions, such as an Africanist tendency to consider only multi-verb SVCs as SVCs, and discarding one-word constructions, as found in Igbo, and also Olutec, Tariana, Lakota, Yimas, and others).

Coexisting types of SVCs in a single language differ as to whether they have concordant or single marking for the various categories discussed here. Synchronically, if there are several types of SVCs in one language, they are likely to be independent grammatical processes, each with a grammaticalization path of its own, and each used to convey a different type of grammatical meaning. SVCs could be conceived of in terms of a multidimensional continuum, covering such parameters as the possibility of pause marking (see §2.3), of semantic cohesion and eventhood (see §2.5) and historical development (or grammaticalization).

Verb serialization is a syntactic resource which allows the speaker to express various aspects of a situation as a single cognitive package within one clause and with one predicate. Such a cognitive packaging strategy is highly diffusable—and thus verb serialization is typically a property of a linguistic area. If a language has no or little bound morphology, it is particularly likely to develop multi-word verb serialization, although synthetic languages are not immune to similar developments.

SVCs show semantic and functional (rather than formal) similarities with other multiverb constructions, both monoclausal—such as converb constructions and clause-chaining (see Chapter 15, this volume)—and biclausal—such as coordinate and overlapping clauses in Ewe (Chapter 5). These similarities justify considering SVCs as part of a multidimensional continuum of multiverb structures. Diachronically speaking, links can be established connecting focal points on this continuum (so, for instance, a special marker of SVCs, as in Khwe and
Yimas, indicates that these constructions come from multiverb structures of a different, non-serial, kind).

Despite the considerable literature on verb serialization, much remains to be investigated in order to obtain a further cross-linguistic perspective on its varied facets. Some of such issues—which should be analysed from both a structural and a semantic viewpoint—include:

- the semantic and pragmatic functional motivation for optional verb serialization;
- the semantics and pragmatic functions of optional concordant marking of grammatical categories;
- further analysis of various origins and grammaticalization paths for different kinds of SVCs;
- further analysis of several coexisting SVCs where they occur in a single language;
- the cognitive and conceptual correlates of verb serialization, as a focal point within a continuum of multiverb constructions.

10. Overview of the volume

This volume aims at a cross-linguistic account of SVCs in typological perspective, in terms of the parameters outlined in this introductory chapter. It features fourteen contributions on languages of varied genetic affiliation and typological profile. We have chosen languages from ‘heavily-serializing’ areas—Ewe from West Africa, Cantonese and Thai from Asia, and Mwotlap, Tetun Dili, and Toqabaqita as representatives of verb serialization in the Austronesian domain. Khwe is a Khoisan language, and its verb serialization has never been previously described. Goemai is somewhat unusual for the Chadic family in that it is almost isolating and has serial verbs. We have also included Dumo, as an example of a serializing language from New Guinea, and three languages from the Americas (Lakota, Tariana, and Olutec). SVCs in Creole languages where they are widely attested have been extensively described in the literature (see, for instance, Baxter 1988; Byrne 1987; Byrne and Huebner 1991), so that it did not seem appropriate to feature a creole language within the space confines of this volume.

The first eight chapters discuss languages with productive SVCs of a variety of structural and semantic types. In Chapter 2, Stephen Matthews discusses multi-word SVCs in Cantonese, a Sinitic language. SVCs in Goemai, a West Chadic language with isolating tendencies, are analysed by Birgit Hellwig in Chapter 3. Chapter 4, by Christa Kilian-Hatz, considers SVCs in Khwe, a Central Khoisan language. Ewe, a Kwa language, analysed by Felix Ameka in Chapter 5, only has symmetrical SVCs, unlike other African languages in this volume.

This is the result of grammaticalization of the erstwhile asymmetrical constructions which gave rise to numerous grammatical markers. The next two
chapters cover a plethora of SVCs in two languages of South East Asia: Eastern Kayah Li, from the Karen group of the Tibeto-Burman family, by David Solnit (Chapter 6), and Thai, from Tai-Kadai family, by A. V. N. Diller (Chapter 7). In Chapter 8, Alexandra Aikhenvald discusses SVCs in Tariana, an Arawak language from northwest Amazonia. The details of SVCs in Dumo, from the Sko family in Papua New Guinea, are presented by Andrew Ingram in Chapter 9.

Of the Oceanic languages discussed in the subsequent three chapters, Mwotlap, analysed by Alexandre François in Chapter 10, has the largest array of productive SVCs. Tetun Dili, discussed by John Hajek in Chapter 11, only has asymmetrical SVCs. (The few erstwhile symmetrical SVCs are now lexicalized compounds.) The language is undergoing ‘deserialization’: SVCs are less and less used, as a result of the influence of the prestige co-official language, Portuguese, which has no verb serialization. In Chapter 12, Frantisek Lichtenberk shows that although in Toqabaqita many of the erstwhile asymmetrical constructions have been grammaticalized both symmetrical and asymmetrical structures are fully productive. This is in contrast to Tetun Dili (but somewhat similar to Ewe).

The next two chapters consider languages with SVCs from Central America and North America. Olutec, a Mixean language from Mexico, by Roberto Zavala (Chapter 13) has one-word SVCs. Lakota, a Siouan language from North America, has a wide range of SVCs, some one-word, some multiverb, whose structural and semantic properties are largely idiosyncratic, as shown by Willem de Reuse (Chapter 14).

Chapter 15, ‘Verbal compounding in Wolaitta and self-organizing principles in languages’, by Azeb Amha and Gerrit Dimmendaal, discusses converb constructions in a language with no SVCs. Converbs in Wolaitta, from the Omotic branch of the Afroasiatic language family, show remarkable functional and semantic similarities with SVCs elsewhere. This accords with a broad approach to multi-verb structures of different kinds as constituting a multidimensional continuum, of which SVCs are part.

In the final chapter, R. M. W. Dixon summarizes some of the main properties and parameters of variation of SVCs, as described in the preceding chapters. As a coda to the volume, he investigates whether a construction type in Dyirbal, involving adverbial-type modification, should be regarded as an asymmetrical SVC. Perhaps SVCs are indeed more pervasive than linguists ever thought?

Appendix. Approaches to serial verb constructions and terminological issues

The phenomenon of serial verb constructions was first identified in Akan by Christaller (1875: 144), and then defined by Westermann in his grammar of Ewe (1907; 1930: 126) as ‘a row of verbs one after the other... (in which) the verbs stand next to each other without being connected’. Dempwolff (1939), in his
grammar of Jabêm, described serial verb constructions as follows: ‘Die Vorstellung mehrerer Geschehnisse, meistens nur zweier, können zu einer neuen Vorstellung zusammengefasst werden, ähnlich wie im Deutschen durch Vorsilben Vorstellungen präzisiert werden in “weichen, ausweichen” ... Dazu werden volle Verbalformen hintereinander gestellt.’ [‘The representation of several events, usually just two, can be put together to form a new representation, similarly to how in German representations are made more precise as in weichen, ausweichen (‘give way, get out of the way’) ... For this purpose full verbs are put one after the other.’]

The term ‘serial verb construction’ was introduced by Balmer and Grant (1929), and then reintroduced by Stewart (1963). The terms ‘serial verb construction’ and ‘serial verb’ have won general acceptance. A few alternative terms appear in the literature—such as ‘verb concatenations’ (Matisoff 1969, 1973), or ‘tandem patterns of verb expressions’ (Senft 1986); or ‘multi-verb constructions’, or ‘verb series’ (Enfield forthcoming).

The first consistent and cross-linguistically informed line of argument for the monoclausal analysis of serial verb constructions was proposed by Foley and Olson (1985). This was in contrast to previous attempts at deriving serial verb constructions from underlying complex sentences with complicated rules for shared argument reduction and conjunction reduction, or underlying complex predicates, for example Bamgbò̀sè (1974); also see Crowley (1987). Some of these attempts were influenced by the theories of the time which required one verb per predicate. Even in recent publications, serial verb constructions occasionally continue to be described as ‘linked clauses’ which ‘behave like a sequence of verb phrases’—for example Watters (2000: 220). However, within the same volume, Creissels (2000: 240) provides arguments in favour of a monoclausal analysis of serial verb constructions.

Distinguishing a serial verb construction from another multiverb structure is not always straightforward. In African languages, consecutive constructions may be easily confused with serial verb constructions. For instance, in Kana, if a conjunction is omitted from a consecutive construction, the resulting verb sequence is similar to a serial verb construction (Ikoro 1995: 260–2); that is, consecutive constructions optionally include a connective (sī) while bona fide serial verb constructions never do.

Along similar lines, the analysis of constructions containing na ‘and’ in Tok Pisin as serial verb constructions remains problematic (examples are found in Verhaar 1991). Akkadian consecutive constructions discussed by Kraus (1987) cannot be considered serial verb constructions for the same reason as Kana consecutive constructions: they allow optional inclusion of the conjunction-*ma ‘and’. Along similar lines, Goddard (1988) calls clause-chaining constructions ‘serial verb constructions’ (whereby nonfinal verbs in a series take a subordinating suffix and can be separated from the final verb by a pause). The term ‘serial verb construction’ in the Tupi-Guaraní linguistic tradition (e.g. Jensen 1999)
refers to gerund constructions composed of two predicates, one of which is marked as a dependent verb; these do not in fact qualify as serial verb constructions, as was demonstrated by Seki (2000).

Difficulties which arise with respect to a definition of what an SVC is and what it is not have led some scholars to deny the very existence and cross-linguistic importance of this phenomenon, especially within an analysis limited by a particular formalism, for example Law and Veenstra (1992).

Since this chapter and this volume are cast within a functional typological framework of analysis, we have not devoted attention to reviewing various formal approaches to serial verb constructions (e.g. Baker 1989, Stewart 2001, and references there). The requirement of obligatory object sharing and a ban on duplicate roles in serial verb constructions suggested by Baker (1989) are not borne out by a close analysis of individual languages. (This requirement is no doubt rooted in his theoretical stance, which demands postulating structural equivalence between a simple verb in a language like English and serial verb constructions in serializing languages, in terms of argument structure and the like.) His statement concerning ‘double headedness’ of serial verb constructions is also problematic. We have seen throughout this chapter that ‘headedness’ of serial verb constructions depends on their types: only asymmetrical SVCs have clear heads. For further criticisms, see Durie (1997). The recently suggested ‘serialization parameter’ (see Stewart 2001) provides an investigation of just a few properties of serial verb constructions in a West African language (Edó), limiting SVCs to just two types (‘resultative’ and ‘consequential’). A number of conclusions (e.g. that ‘no verb in the serial verb construction can bear morphological tense inflection’: Stewart 2001: 179) are not borne out by the facts of the world’s languages. Neither are the lexical constraints and argument-sharing properties (summarized on pp. 266–72): for instance, Stewart claims that only in ‘consequential’ serial verb constructions are there ‘sequences of two transitive verbs’. It has been shown throughout this volume that this is simply untrue. To be able to successfully formulate a ‘serial verb construction parameter’ which would explain why some language have SVCs and others do not, one needs a broader perspective on cross-linguistic variation in verb serialization.

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